

























# JUNY!

*Or, ONLY ONE GIRL'S STORY.*

A Romance of the Society Crust—  
Upper and Under.



BY

**T. C. DELEON,**

AUTHOR OF "CREOLE AND PURITAN," "FOUR YEARS IN REBEL  
CAPITALS," "CROSS PURPOSES," ETC., ETC.









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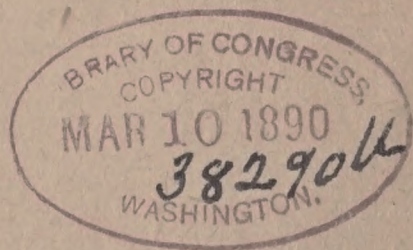
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TO THE  
GENTLE "AUTOCRAT" OF AMERICAN LETTERS,  
**Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes,**  
AS SLIGHT ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE DEEP DEBT  
OWED HIM BY ALL WHO READ,  
AND ESPECIALLY BY ALL WHO WRITE,  
IN THE SOUTH.







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# JUNY:

## OR ONLY ONE GIRL'S STORY.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE COYOTE AND HIS MATE.

An afternoon of mountain midsummer.

The greenish-blue distance of the Alleghany chain, tempered softly by slant rays of a low-descending sun; the nearer peaks standing out—one might poetize—bold sentinels before a dimly marked line-of-battle of the Titans.

Low, rosy clouds float close down, behind the distant range; but shaggy, tree-crowned crests of nearer spurs suggest easy foothold for those ambitious giants, whence to charge the blue vault, close o'ertopping them.

A soft, pulsing haze tones the whole grand picture, spreading away as far as eye may reach. Fleecy patches of mist—thick-rising at first as carded wool—spread out above into fan-shaped, smoke-like drifts; resting still upon the air and marking the open glades, or smaller water-courses, beneath.

Closer in, the dark mountains, bearded with pine and laurel and chestnut-oak, dip down into cup-shaped valleys—or “coves;” some losing themselves in black shadow, some dotted by open pasture-land, with here and there red gashes of ploughed field.

Through the nearest “cove” the little river—low now from summer drouth—straggles feebly over its rock-spread



bed ; now marking but a steely thread, now chafing itself into frosted silver in the shallows.

Hicksville, the metropolis of Black Mountain, was seated high upon that "backbone" ridge of the Alleghany ; almost equally claimable by Tennessee and North Carolina, so near is it to the borders of both. Not a very populous center, even at that date, close *post-bellum*, its site might vainly be searched for to-day, even on the best-intentioned local maps. Then its edifices numbered a tumbled-down blacksmith shop—presided over by a lank, claybank-colored "covite," when there happened work enough to heat his forge and not whisky enough to heat what stood with him for brain—a "schule-house," even more tumbled-down than the smithy ; and an inn, misnamed "The Rest," save for the truth that there was no more of the village.

This resort of infrequent passers and of the sparse population of self-styled miners was fronted by a wide, low "stoop," running its whole length, and upon this gave all four of its low, dingy and unswept rooms. In them were performed every function of the hostelrie, bar-tending, lavatory, sleeping and the preparation of scarcely doubtful repasts for occasional customers.

Here and there around, on the crests of lower ridges, rose the smoke of shanties, more or less distant from this central group ; themselves wide enough apart to make a loud hail necessary to attract attention.

"The Rest" itself was perched on the knob of the ridge, overlooking the cabins and the coves below ; and behind it was cleft, by some immemorial spasm of nature's breast, a ragged jawed cañon of some fifteen feet in width, but gaping sheer down in blackness and gloom for ten times that depth. Over this gulch was improvised a rickety bridge of two light planks, held in their places by wooden pins, not too securely driven into the light soil of the rock.



Garden, or enclosure, the inn boasted none of; the only growth being the sere mountain grass and straggling tufts of brush and laurel.

Jack Rudd, the Hicksville mine host, was scant pattern of the landlord, in the Rabelais view. Six feet two of tough, hard muscle, tightly stretched over huge bones, terminated in great red hands and feet that filled ample raw-hide boots; and the whole was topped by a not very inviting face, redeemed by the bold, blue stare of its eyes. And just now, Jack Rudd seemed in no very cheery mood as he lounged toward the cliff's edge, and continued his talk with a long, thin negro man of that uncertain age, never betrayed in his race by reddened eyeballs and semi-grizzled hair.

"An' so ye' doan like th' Coyote thar?" Rudd queried, as he twisted off a huge segment of black tobacco with his strong, yellow teeth and stuffed the remainder in his hip pocket. "Ye say ye doan like 'im?"

"No, I don' lik' um! Jesso, Morse Rudd, jesso! Leas' ways, Henry Washington Clay don' say as he don' like Morse Kyle Hardy; but den he ain't a-spilin' on him, 'nuther, sho's yo' born."

"Waal, *I* ain't a-spilin' on him nuther, Clay," the white answered. "But then ye' know, Kyle Hardy's been a smaart chance useful ter we hones' *miners* in these yere mountings."

"Miners! Jesso, Morse Rudd, jesso! Yah—yah—yee-ah!" guffawed the negro, striking a match on his thigh and holding it to his black clay pipe. "Dem is miners sho' nuff; and dem leetle jimmyjons wot dey digs up! Yah—yah—yee-ah-h!" And again the negro's guffaw trolled out cheerily, its prolonged finale blowing out his match—"Prehaps dey's filled wid winegur, dem jimmyjons—prehaps dey's filled wid merlassus, an' *prehaps* dey ain't! Howsomdever, dey's *full*, wen dey lebes dese hills, sho's yo' born!"



"Waal, miners, ur shiners, it doan' make no differ," responded Rudd, grimly. "By th' Tarnal, we' uns is got tur live *some* way, law ur nuther! An' Kyle Hardy's ben a right smaart chance o' use tur we' uns, ef he be a gambolier. But that pard o' hisn, he's a nice pill! He's a sweet 'un, is ole Jackpots!"

"Jesso, Morse Rudd, jesso! Dem *do* say he war chrissom Morse Tip Miles, but dey's name him ole Jackpots 'long de ribber, 'cos he radder scuffle de kyards dan eat! An' fore de Lord, I bleebe he would, sho's yo' born!"

"Right ye be, Clay," Mr. Rudd answered, turning his head and squirting an amber stream toward the inn, "An' them two *stran*-gers, as strayed onto th' Rest las' night, they *hev* met a nice par!"

"Jesso, Morse Rudd, jesso," returned the negro. "An' dey's oncommon lucky, dem is, ef dey don' strike *two* par, wid de odd one in de sleebe, fo' dey's don'; jesso!"

"Waal, I reckon yer mebbe right," Rudd answered, as he turned and strolled toward the slender bridge. "I'll jes' keep a' eye on th' Coyote; fur I won' stan' no queer game foolishin' on a *stran*-ger at th' Rest. Ye look arter them trav'lers, Clay, wile I call up ther hosses fur a feed. Sure the're restid enuff now fur a start!" And the lank landlord strode over the shaking planks and was lost to sight behind the sides of the jutting fissure, into which they fitted across the cañon.

The old negro lit his pipe and puffed slowly as he mumbled:

"Jesso—jesso! Dem's allers up ter sharp wuk, dey two. Howsomdever, ef dey don' mek mistek wid dat young gent, den, Wash Clay, yo' dun gone wrong fur wunst! Hello! Wa's dat? Suffin' dun gone wrong dar a'ready, sho's——"

High voices were resounding from the inn, and Henry Washington Clay's soliloquy was cut short by the swinging open of the door. Stepping from it came a tall, swarthy



man, with ugly scowl on his rather handsome face. Well dressed and graceful, he looked the gentleman. Rapidly followed a lithe, sinewy young fellow in undress cavalry jacket and riding boots, his fair face flushed, his gray eyes flashing with anger. Restraining him, by grasp upon his arm, was an older man of dignified port, also in riding costume.

As this trio crossed the porch and stepped upon the ground, slowly shuffled after them a snuffy, dingy man with flaccid face, lit by twinkling keenness of eye, and an atmosphere of shabby gentility all over him.

Anger plainly ruled the first three ; but there was a slimy sort of nonchalance about the last comer hard to define.

"Only one explanation need be given in such a case," the young officer was saying. "We stop the game because we think we have cause!"

"I do not understand your manner, sir!" retorted the tall gambler.

"Then I'll make it understood. We were foolish to play cards, even to kill time, in this hole. You and your fellow cheat—Drop your hand ; *quick!*" he interrupted himself as his revolver flashed out.

Kyle Hardy, known as "The Coyote," seemed a man of action rather than words. As the other had spoken, his right hand slipped swiftly toward his hip-pocket ; as quickly it fell back to his side as the officer added :

"I have served too long at the frontier not to know the brand on cattle like you!"

"Steady, Wilmot, my boy," the older stranger interposed. "You may be rash. Why our little game was so small that, without proof——"

"Proof!" answered the younger, "Why, uncle, I discarded the ace of clubs ; next moment it showed as one of the three in the hand of that quiet gentleman there!" and he



pointed with his pistol at the snuffy gambler. Promptly that worthy slid behind his confrere of the dark moustache; and, from that coigne of vantage, he half stammered:

"Well, it *must* have been—the most *singular* accident! But I—don't remember!"

"Well! What are you going to do about it?" sneered Hardy, in bravado.

"I am going to denounce you both to these honest people up here," the young officer answered coolly.

"The people! Oh! you are?" sneered the other.

"I am. You are not fit associates for these hard-working miners," the soldier retorted.

"Oh! *They* need your Sunday-school, eh?" Hardy said.

"And pray, who are you, that they'll take your word?"

The older traveler moved coolly between the men:

"He is Lieutenant Wilmot Beverly Browne, Twelfth United States Cavalry," he said. "I am Colonel Randolph Baylor, retired."

The tall gambler started at the name, staring hard at the speaker. Then he turned away with the muttered oath:

"Damn him! and he does not recognize me, *yet!*"

"Belated yesterday, crossing these mountains," the colonel continued, "we stumbled upon this singular inn—"

"And now, that we have had full enough of it," put in Lieutenant Browne, "may I return your question and ask—who the devil are *you?*"

A strange smile—showing his white, regular teeth, under the jetty moustache—flitted over the gambler's face. He stared absently at the older soldier, seeming to forget his nephew's presence; but his snuffy partner now sidled to the front, seeming about to speak. Then Hardy stopped him with a quick gesture.

"I am Captain Kyle Hardy," he said boldly, "a gentleman living on my means."



"And your friend, I presume," Wilmot Browne replied, "is a gentleman of ways and means?"

"I believe I am a gentleman," Tip Miles said, with his peculiar hesitation. "But about my means, I—I don't quite remember."

"Come! We've had about enough of this!" Hardy said roughly. "You are not our judges, nor are we in the witness-box. If our answers don't suit, we'd better leave it to this jury!"

He tapped his pistol with a bullying gesture and Browne advanced a step toward him; but the colonel calmly interposed with:

"Tut, my boy! This game is not worth the powder. We can afford to let these 'gentlemen' take their own course, while we take our horses and leave this delectable inn."

"As you prefer," Hardy replied, insolently; and he passed his arm under his companion's. "Come along, Tip; we can afford to leave these high-headed Virginia gentlemen!"

Miles followed—half-dragged and with evident reluctance—staring hard at Colonel Baylor, as he answered his companion in deprecating whisper:

"I thought it was safe, Kyle; but I don't—quite remember. I'm so hard up——"

"For brains!" the other finished brutally. "Your clumsiness disgraces the profession! But come along! I'll make it warm for these high-toners, who'd expose us to the —— *miners!*"

Wilmot Browne looked after them, an amused smile replacing his late frown, as he said, cheerily:

"It was rather hard not to teach that black-browed bully a lesson, Uncle Ran. But, as you say, a row here would not pay. And here's another native," he added, turning to Washington Clay, who watched the altercation with interest.

"Do you belong here?"



"I 'blongs to de Lord, Morsa—Jesso, jesso!" Clay replied. "My boss he dun gib Wash he freedum fo' de wah. An' sides dat, Morse Linkum, he dun manserpate me sum mo'! But Wash, he don' git so much hog an' homly lik' a use to, sho's yo' born!"

"Here's a sample of the result precipitated by the proclamation," Will said to his uncle. "Say, Wash, I suppose you believe in evolution?"

"Yes, Morse Nevee," the black answered, gravely. "Yes, I bleeves in dat; but I don' quite 'stan your 'spression ob de subjec'!"

"So you are content," the colonel said, smiling, "not to know Darwin?"

"Jesso, Morsa, jesso!" Wash answered, quickly—"but I *does* know 'im! Yah, yah, *yee-ah*! I knows him well! Only I ain't seed him roun' bout yere lately."

"And you revert to your ultimate forefathers?" Browne asked, gravely.

"Wy, bress yo' sole, honey, Wash ain't never had no fo' faders! One daddy 'nuff fur *him*, sho's yo' born! Yah, yah——*yee*——*ah*!"

"Well, you are the happiest citizens of this country, nevertheless," Colonel Baylor said. "That was you singing awhile ago, was it not?"

"Jesso, Morsa, jesso," the negro answered, gravely. "Dat wor a hymin I wor singin'; a hymin my breddren is a-singin' all ober dis lan'."

"Well, while we wait for the horses, sing it again," Browne said, with thumb and finger in vest pocket.

"Jesso, Morse Nevee, jesso," Clay answered. "Wash *kin* sing; but jess now I'se got a so' fut an' de roomatiz dun git in de roof o' my mouf. But," he relented, as the young man held up a shining half-dollar, "Wash kin try, ef Morse Nevee *ensist* on 'em!"



Then, with the air of a society tenor at Mrs. Knickerbocker's five-o'clock tea, and with solemnity befitting the "hymn" his fellows intoned "all ober dis lan'," Wash began. And he sang in pleasing voice and good time, but drawing out into quaint melancholy the last word of every other line, and the refrain :

Ole nigga wukkin' on de lebbbee,  
Wukkin' all de *d—a—y!*

Fur a fo' punce!

Totin' in de coffy an' de shugga  
Fur mitey leetle *p—a—y!*

Fur a fo' punce!

But de Lord he mitey good to he nigga,  
Fur all *d—a—t!*

De Lord gib he nigga hominee  
An' possum *f—a—t!*

Fur a fo' punce!

Hoein' in de cornfiel', cuttin' shugga cane;  
Wukkin' in de sunshine, wukkin' in de rain—  
Wukkin' like de debble, wen he want to play—  
Lissnen' fur de dinna horn, so he git away—  
*Fur a fo—o—o' punce!*

The singer came to a sudden stop, deep solemnity making his face shine. Then, gravely, he took a few quaint steps of a double-shuffle, patting his thigh to time, ere he broke out again :

Ole nigga wukkin' on de lebbbee,  
Wukkin' wile de sun so *h—o—t!*  
Tinkin' all de time 'bout he Dinah,  
Cookin' de cowpeas in de *p—o—t!*  
Fur a fo' punce!



But de Lord Him lub he nigga mitey well,  
Fur all *d—a—t!*  
De Lord Him know he nigga by de smell,  
Fur all *d—a—t!*  
Fur a fo' punce!

Hoein' in de cornfiel', cuttin' shugga cane;  
Wukkin' in de sunshine, wukkin' in de rain;  
Wukkin' like de debble, fur mitey leetle *p—a—y*,  
Lissnen' fur de dinna horn, so he git away—  
Fur a *fo'* punce! Fur a *FO—O—O'* *punce!*





## CHAPTER II.

## THE SHINERS' GAL.

"Bravo! Wash. You *are* a singer!" cried the young lieutenant, tossing him the coin.

"Jesso, Morsa, jesso!" the black answered. "Wash kin sing, but Lor'! Yo' jes' ought'er heah Juny!"

"Juny? Who is he?" Browne asked.

"Jesso, Morsa, jesso," Wash repeated, "Juny *kin* sing, sho's yo' born!"

"But *who* is Juny?" persisted the colonel.

"Juny? Who Juny? She my chile. Leas'ways she ent nobody chile, 'cept'n all de men in de camp, Morsa! But Wash, he dun tuk car' o' Juny mos'ways, ebber sense po' Higgins die, de fuss ob dis yeah!"

And, as though in response to the gentleness that crept into the old negro's tone, a clear, strong girl-voice came floating over the cañon, in the refrain of a rude camp song.

"Jesso, Morse Nevee, jesso! Lissen' to dat! Wa' I tole yo'? Da' chile cummin' now; an' she *kin* sing, sho's yo' born!"

"So Juny is an orphan girl you take care of?" the colonel asked.

"Lor' bres yo', da's so, Morse Kurnul! Leas'ways Juny tek keah ob me. An' yeah she be! Cum yeah, chile! Cum yeah! Yah! yah, *yee-ah*!"

Over the frail bridge, with lightness of the mountain doe, bounded a tall, wild-looking child of some thirteen years; shoeless and hatless, with her coarse, ill-made dress clinging to the slender limbs as she ran. Masses of shining brown hair crisped over her broad, fair forehead and streamed back



on the wind ; and a lissome grace of movement dispelled all idea of coarseness that might have risen at sight of the tanned hands and freckled cheeks.

"By jove ! A perfect mountain elf !" the colonel exclaimed. "What an honest face !"

"And honest figure !" Browne added. "Arithmetic would be worth study, were figures in society as free as that !"

The girl ran straight to the old negro, pushing back the massed hair from her forehead with both hands and gazing at him with real affection in her honest eyes. And the hands, as the city men noted, were slim and taper, for all their sunbrown ; and the eyes were meaningful in their blue depths, while fearless as those of the panther whelp.

"You bad ole Uncle Clay !" she cried in clear, musical voice, not belonging to the "covite" nasality of those mountains—"I was jest waitin' to catch you ! Snakes ! but *won't* I give it to you fur not comin' home to git no dinner ! Now, ye're laffin' ! Ye're not mindin' me one bit !"

"Jesso, chile, jesso ! yah ! yah ! yee-ah !" shouted the old negro. "Wa' I tole yo', Morse Nevee ? See how dis chile tek car' o' dis ole nigga ?"

The girl quickly turned to the strangers ; shyly, but with no awkwardness and again pushing back the masses of her hair with both hands.

"Lor' ! Uncle Clay," she said reproachfully, "Ye hadn't orter ask the *stran-gers* !" Then, staring at Browne an instant with the frank honesty of childhood, she whispered to the negro : "Snakes ! *Ain't* he good lookin', though ?"

"Wilmot," Colonel Baylor said seriously, "what it is I can not define ; but something in that child's face draws me strangely to her." Then, holding his hand to her, the old gentleman asked gently :

"And so your name is Juny ?"



She came forward frankly, but with nothing of boldness; and, putting her hand in his, nodded brightly as she answered:

"Well, yes—I reckon!"

"A pretty name, but strange," he said, still gazing into her face. "How did you get it?"

"Dunno, *stran-ger*. It was give to me, I reckon. But that ain't all of it," she added. "Juny's only the short fur Juniata."

"But what is your other name?" Wilmot Browne queried curiously.

"Snakes, *stran-ger*!" the girl answered, somewhat bashfully, as her eyes fell before the bold gaze of the young soldier. "How many names do ye' reckon a gal child orter have?"

"But how old are you, Juny?" Browne persisted.

Again the girl shook her head, pushing back the fair hair from her face.

"Dunno," she answered simply. "Reckon I'm 'bout twenty, or ten!" And once more she whispered to the negro: "Snakes! but *don't* he talk smooth?"

Just then Mr. Tip Miles ambled alone around the corner of the house. The girl's face was full toward him, the sunset glow warming its sunbrowned tint and filling out its lines of over childish thinness. He stared at her; passed his hand across his eyes, as to aid some dull memory; then staring again, muttered:

"Wonder have I ever seen that kid before? Must have seen her; but I can't—quite—remember."

And the snuffy gambler turned an attent ear toward the group, as the colonel spoke again:

"But, my child, who were your parents?"

Juny shook her head, puzzled; then a merry smile showed all her white teeth, as she answered:



"Donno, *stran-ger* ; guess I ain't never had none."

A quaint satire on a smile crossed the listening gambler's face, as he muttered again :

"She and I are twins ! I never had any either."

"But who brought you up?" Wilmot Browne queried.

She looked at him with the same bright smile ; admiring honestly.

"I wasn't never brought up," she said naturally. "Reckon I jest tumbled up. Uncle Clay looks out fur me, mor'n the rest, ever sense po' Higgins was shot. That was when th' soldiers tried to take the shiners'——" She stopped short, at a warning sign and dry cough from Wash Clay, adding awkwardly :

"When the—a—*miners* was—an' Higgins died that night."

"And who was Higgins?" the colonel asked.

"Wy, he was *my* daddy ! Leastways, he was the only daddy I ever had, I reckon."

Will Browne laughed merrily, saying to his uncle :

"Pretty difficult climbing, that family tree !" Then turning to Juny, he asked :

"Will you sing for us ? I know you can, for Uncle Wash told us."

The girl had echoed his laugh merrily ; her face brightening into almost beauty at reflection of that inner sunshine. She answered promptly :

"Kin sing, *stran-ger*? Well, I reckon—*jest* ! I know lots an' lots o' songs ; but sometimes, when I sing, it makes me sorry sort o' ; kind o' takes me home—only I ain't never had no home ; an' no mother 'n father, 'cep'n Uncle Clay an' poor Higgins !" A shade passed over the sunny face as she spoke ; and Tip Miles—shuffling a noiseless step nearer—took himself into confidence by the muttered remark :

"She growed and growed of herself, just like a Jackpot ! But *whar* in thunder *have* I seen the kid ?"



Old Clay put a hand of gentle encouragement on the girl's shoulder.

"Go 'long, chile; go 'long an' sing fur Morse Nevee, wen he ax 'um!"

"That I will, Uncle Clay," she answered cheerily—"I'll sing my bes' song, 'cos th' ole man seems sort o' sorry and 'cos"—she tipped up on the little bare toes, whispering close in the black ear—"cos—snakes! the young 'un's good lookin'!"

"That's right, Juny!" Browne encouraged, *apropos* to the unheard whisper. "Sing your best song and I'll have something for you."

The child turned quickly, facing him as he pulled a bright coin from his pocket. Suddenly the light fell out of the little face, leaving it grave and stern; the brow darkened and the features older-seeming than before. Even the voice changed to a cold, childish treble that retorted:

"I don't want it! I *shan't* sing—*there*! Say, *stran-ger*, we's po' folks an' don't have good clothes an' things, up here; but, snakes! we ain't a beggin'."

Browne moved a step toward her; but she answered the movement sharply:

"I was goin' to sing 'cos you was kind an' gentle—so different from th' shiners! But now, I——"

She paused abruptly; the thin little lips quivering, the blue eyes brimmed with tears. But a strong effort—emphasized by a quick stamp of the slim, bare foot—dammed the flood behind the curved lashes; and she turned away with a childish flirt of the scant petticoat.

"Go 'long, chile! Wa' de matter now? Go 'long an' sing fur de gemmen, sho'!"

Whatever Clay's influence, it was powerless here. With another stamp and a short—"I *shan't*! *There*!"—Juny marched to the low porch, with a magnificent assumption of



carelessness, and, sitting with her back to them, became absorbed in contemplation of a rent in her skirt.

Wilmot Browne looked after her, with much irritation at his own awkwardness.

"She's as independent as her own mountain air ——" he began, adding suddenly: "Heaven! Uncle, what's wrong?"

Colonel Baylor, gazing steadily at the girl, threw his hand to his head as the young man spoke. A deep red flush rose to his brow, and, with heavy eyes and a half gasp, he leaned on the other's shoulder.

"Nothing, a little dizziness," he answered, after a deep breath. "One of my turns, from the heat, perhaps. But, Will, that child's face somehow recalls the saddest memories of my life. Just then, as she gave you that look—why, heaven only knows—the eyes of John Harrington seemed to come between and stare at me!"

"Harrington! That clerk of yours who was drowned in the Gulf? Come, uncle," Will replied, cheerily, "brace up and banish these ideas! Brooding on them only makes you ill."

"I try to, my boy," the older man answered slowly, "but they *will* return sometimes."

"Well, come into the shanty and pack the saddle-bags," his nephew answered. "The landlord has gone after the horses and we'll be off soon."

As the pair passed, arm in arm, under the low doorway, Miles shuffled down nearer to the girl.

"By the 'tarnal Jackpot!" he muttered, "the old man is the same. *Her* brother, if I'm a living sinner! Well! If accident can't stock the cards and deal out the *darndest* combinations! To meet *him* this way! And my botherin' 'bout this gell! It's too much for Tip Miles! Say, little 'un," he added aloud to Juny—"you're a good gell!"



"No, I ain't!" Juny flashed round upon him, still pouting and with red eyes—"I ain't, 'cep'n good fur nothin'. Higgins allers said so!"

"Well, then, Higgins was a dod blamed jackass!" Mr. Miles asserted calmly.

"Snakes! *stran-ger*!" retorted Juny, springing up and facing Miles so fiercely that he recoiled. "Ye dunno wot ye're sayin'! Higgins wus my daddy! He wus my *only* daddy an'—I—loved——"

The little brown hands unclenched as the flood of recollection swept away anger. They closed softly over the hot face and the many-sided struggle culminated in tears, as the child threw herself face-downward on the grass, sobbing bitterly.

"Phew! She's a hot one!" Miles muttered. Then he sidled over to Wash Clay, who was hoisting mysterious signals with his black pipe.

"He warn't her daddy, 'tall, Morse Jackpots," the negro said. "Higgins wor engineneer on de Ribber Queen wen I tote wood fur 'er, enjurin' ob de wah. Den wen de wah bizness dun brek up, me an' Higgins we moobe roun' de Juniata Gap, yonner."

Clay waved his hand as though the Pennsylvania stream flowed through the cove below them.

"Dere we start a timber choppin' an' mek raffs an' float 'um down to de Susquerhanner, sho's yo' born!"

"Well, whose child is she, anyway?" Miles asked.

"Jesso, Morse Jackpots, jesso. One cole nite in de fall, jess twelbe year ago, de win' blow so hard me an' Higgins go down to de ribber to tie up dem raffs more tighter. An' dere—rite 'mong dem logs wus a-layin' a gal-chile, 'bout a year ole. Lor'! Morse Jackpots, how dat chile *wus* a-squallin'! Yah! yah! *yee*—ah! She wus squallin', sho's yo' born."

"And that is the girl?" Miles asked, curiously.



"Jesso ; da' she. We tek 'um up to de cabin an' raise 'um ebber sence ; an' Higgins, he name de gal Juniata, arter de ribber were we fin' 'um ; an' da's de troofe."

With both hands in his pockets—perhaps for lack of other's to put them in—Tip Miles seemed lost in a brown study. At last he came out of it, muttering—

"May I be shuffled and cut for a misdeal, if I understand it all. Old Jackpots to cotton to a stray kid picked out of a raft ! But there *is* something in her eyes brings back the old days before I was the castaway wretch I am ——" He checked himself suddenly. "'Tip Miles, may you lose the pot on a full, if you ain't growing as soft a flat as everybody plays you for !'"

He shuffled nearer the child. She was quiet now, and the old negro had squatted by her side, patting her gently with his horny hand.

"Dere now, honey ! Dere now ! Yo' jess cry yo'seff to sleep. Jesso, chile, jesso. Yo' see, Morse Jackpots," he continued, rising, "she dun cry 'eseff to sleep. But Higgins warn't her daddy mor'n you. Now, yo' jess leff de chile 'lone, yo' heah ? 'Cos she ain't yo'uns and she's de shiners' gal, sho's yo' born !"

And with the injunction, Clay marched off into the house, as if it had been Delphos, and he the Oracle.



## CHAPTER III.

## REVELATION !

The snuffy gambler became a changed man, as he looked after the negro. The slouched form erected and the bleared eyes glowed, as he muttered through set lips :

"If I *am* right ; if this Baylor is the man, and my pal is John Harrington, I'll hold the age, if I stock a new deck to get it. But now, to hide the brains under the deck, 'till I need the ace of sense, hid in my sleeve !"

With the words still on his lips, the man's stoop returned and he stood stupidly awaiting the rapid return of the other gambler.

"Well, Tip," Hardy said, as he came up, "I've been busy undoing some of the mess made by your cursed stupidity. But, damn me ! if I can see how you let that young tenderfoot tumble to your game !"

"Why, Kyle," the other drawled, "what is poker without three aces ? And that little club just fit my hand. But I don't quite—remember."

"You never do, at the right time," Hardy growled. "But never mind their hands now, for their heads are in danger. I swore I'd fix these Virginia bloods !"

"You said you'd raise the shiners !" Miles cried, quickly.

"Oh ! You remember, do you ?" Hardy glanced keenly at him, but added carelessly : "Well, I *did* it ! The word is now going round that they are U. S. detectives ; that they've tumbled to the mining racket and are here to locate the secret stills."

"And the boys believe it ?" Miles asked, anxiously.



"Why shouldn't they?" the other answered. "I've taught them to trust Kyle Hardy before to-day. You see the sun nearly down behind the trees? Well, as the moon rises, Judge Lynch will swing our friends from the tree there, over the gulch."

"You've done that?" Miles cried, naturally. "You would murder these men 'cos they caught me cheating, and ——" he checked himself suddenly—"and, I can't quite remember."

"Yes; for that and more: ten times more!" Hardy answered with an ugly scowl—"For what is sweet to man and woman—revenge!" He turned away, striding about a moment, then added:

"You can't remember; but it's relief to tell it now! Long years ago—before I knew you—before cards and drink made me what I am—I loved a pure, true girl. She was different from all other women—May Redfern!"

Miles stared straight at the setting sun. Perhaps it was the red reflection that dyed his brow and shone in his eyes, as his lips formed the soundless word—"May!"

"She was an orphan and alone," Hardy hurried on. "She might have married me, had not this cursed Baylor cut in, with his uniform and old Virginia blood! *He* never knew that his war clerk, working with him only to be near his wife; and for revenge, if chance served—was his rival, John Harrington!"

Again the other's lips formed the name; but the sun, now sunk behind the trees, left his face ashen.

But Hardy, plunged in vindictive memory, did not note, as he hurried on:

"Well, just after the war, in New Orleans, he publicly discharged me, for cheating at cards. Twice he had wronged me; stealing my sweetheart, then my reputation. Shortly after—as if in judgment on him—*she* died."



Again the white lips in Miles' ashen face moved. This time, Hardy caught the words:

"She died—*poor May!*"

"What do you mean!" he cried, in genuine amaze.

Tip Miles turned away his face. He answered very slowly, but in his old manner:

"I must repeat—so I—*can remember!*"

"Then listen," Hardy growled. "After that New Orleans grew hateful to me. I sailed for New York, and on the very steamer—by what priests call Providence—there was her——"

An eager gasp, that will could not repress, broke from Miles; and on it came the words:

"Yes; on that steamer was the——"

He checked himself quickly; but not before Hardy—recalled from memories by the tone—had bent his piercing gaze upon him. But Miles bore it quietly, and the other only snarled:

"Well, damned if I ever knew you interested in anything before! But, Tip, you must be precious fond of me to—remember! The rest is soon told. A Norther came, and every soul on board was drowned!"

Miles drawled out, with face averted still, but in his old tone:

"*Every* one drowned? I don't—quite remember!"

"Yes; every one," Hardy answered, with an ugly laugh. "Jack Harrington went down with the rest; and when they picked up a nearly dead man on a spar, *his* name was Kyle Hardy! After that, I went from bad to worse, till I met you. That settled it; there was no worse than that! Old Baylor thinks me dead long ago. Time and beards change boys. But the old account between us stands open; to-day adds interest to it! Moonrise will give me a receipt in full: the shiner's short shrift, and the spy's tree!"



The dusk began to grow grey ; and through it Tip Miles looked like a statue of ashes. Face and form were perfectly still, but a strange gleam played under the drooped eyelids; and—as Hardy took a sudden turn of several steps—a stealthy hand crept to Miles' breast.

"I could cut his cold heart out!" he muttered to himself, behind set teeth. "But, no! Steady, Tip, and wait! 'Tain't your deal——*yet!*"

Far over the eastern crests, the light grew slowly white; and the distant tree-tops caught faint tips of silver, as the full moon rose behind the screening mountains. The gambler waved his hand toward the light, calling the other to note it, with a joyous oath.

Whether roused by his voice, or waking naturally, the sleeping child stirred and lazily rubbed her eyes, as the exultant gambler again turned toward Miles.

"Look, Tip! Yonder she comes!" he cried aloud. "Ten minutes more will see her ladyship's face as broad as silver, and then come the shiners! He shall die the spy's death, this lofty Colonel Baylor! And, Tip, I'll kill him, body and reputation. See here!"

With the haste of hate he tore open his vest, drawing from an inner pocket a long and time-stained pocket-book.

"This went down in the gulf with Jack Harrington, but he willed it to Kyle Hardy, and all his hatred with it," he went on, rapidly—"These are army blanks, the receipts signed by Randolph Baylor for expected stores. These were not received; he ordered them destroyed. But I kept an eye to windward and these blanks with it. Washington departments now have detectives hunting up the cotton thefts of the year after the war. These signatures are the death warrant of Baylor's reputation. Over them I'll fill up receipts for thousands of bales never accounted for by him, claim the reward and deliver them to the Auditor!"



Exulting, Hardy turned toward the eastern light, now high and broad in the sky behind the peaks, the tree-tops standing out against it in black and ragged silhouettes. And again, Miles' hand, creeping toward his breast, dropped to his side, as he muttered:

"Not *yet!* Not till I get those forgeries!" and, he added, aloud—"So, Kyle, you mean to murder these travelers?"

The girl, now awake and risen to her elbow, caught the words clearly, her eyes wide with dismay.

"*Murder!*" she whispered to herself—"the ole *stran-ger* and the good lookin' young 'un! Snakes! They *shan't!*"

"Randolph Baylor and his pretty nephew shall swing at moonrise from yonder limb!" Hardy answered, brutally—"But we'd best vamos and keep dark till the shiners come. Hear that?"

And, as he spoke, Clay's voice rose from the inn with the endless refrain: "*Fur all d-a-t! Fur a fo-o-o' pounce!*"

Miles looked around. The inn was still and dark, one blinking dip showing dull through the window of the travelers' room. The full, round moon, white as burnished silver, had popped up over the black tree-tops, flooding the foreground with light as clear as day, brighter from the heavy shadows still resting on the cañon and the little bridge. And, taking in all this, Miles muttered to himself:

"*Can* I warn these men in time? They may escape—By the 'tarnal Jackpot—the kid!"

For his eye fell upon Juny, crouching close in shadow of the low porch; only the small face touched by the moonlight, and its eyes glowing like coals toward Kyle Hardy, following him like a wildcat's without motion of her head. Miles caught her notice, made a swift gesture, then pressed his finger on his lip.

One quick gleam of intelligence shot back to him. Then Juny's face sunk naturally upon the porch; her eyes closed,



as if in heavy slumber. And seeing this, the snuffy gambler moved gradually nearer to the child, speaking slow and clear—

“All right, Kyle,” he said. “Let me see. The stills are warned that Baylor and his nephew are spies! The shiners are to hang them to the spy’s tree at moonrise. And there is *nobody to warn them!*”

Hardy stared at him in surprise.

“Why, damn me! if you don’t remember for once,” he said with a hard, ugly laugh. “But, now you’ve got your memory, you’re not safe out of my sight. So, come along.”

“All right, Kyle; I’m coming,” Miles answered, shuffling along behind the other.

As they turned the corner of the inn and passed into the shadow, he turned once more.

Juny had crawled, swiftly and noiselessly, around the edge of the low porch. Her body was in darkness, only brow and eyes visible above the ledge. But the eyes were as full of intelligence as of fire, and the little head nodded thrice—so rapidly that the fair hair flickered and glowed in the moonlight, as though belonging to some mountain gnome.

Over the still mountain-top the white light poured, peopling the rock-bastions of the slim bridge with shadow-sentinels.

Through the dead stillness battered and crashed the voice of Wash Clay in the “hymin” that his fellows were intoning “all ober dis lan’.”

And the snuffy old gambler, slouching listlessly along behind his pal, took it all in with one vivid backward glance and muttered softly to himself:

“Now, Jack Harrington, the hands are dealt, but Tip Miles holds the age!”



## CHAPTER IV.

## JUNY ACCEPTS AN INVITATION.

When the figures of the two men faded to nothingness in the gloom of the house, Juny rose from the ground.

Over the childish face was the shadow of a great horror ; but through it gleamed the stronger light of a fixed purpose. She stood still an instant, the little brown hands twisted hard together. Then she cried :

“ Wot *kin* it mean? Murder them *stran-gers* ! Hang 'em by lies ! Snakes ! but they *shan't* ! Not if Juny kin stop 'em ! ”

Suddenly the little face—drawn and hardened in its excitement and wrath—softened and quickened, for the old negro's voice rang out close at hand, in the endless refrain, as his lank figure, from the shadow, moved into clear moonlight.

“ Oh ! Uncle Wash ! Uncle Clay ! ” the child cried, running to him and seizing his bare, black arm in pretty impatience, “ Who *is* they ? Quick ! Who *is* them men ? ”

“ Wa' men ? Dem ? Dem two gwine yonner ? Wa' yo' want 'long o' dem men, chile ? ”

“ But tell me : Who *is* they ? ” And the little hand patted the sinewy arm in eagerness for reply.

“ Jesso, chile, jesso, ” the black answered deliberately. “ Dem men's spotes, dey is, sho's yo' born ! ”

“ Sports ! Gamboliers ? ” the child asked, catching her breath.

“ Jesso, chile. Dem's Morse Kyle Hardy, wot dey calls de Kioty, an' Morse Jackpots Miles. ”

“ And bad men ? Rale *bad* ? ” she urged.



"Rite yo' be, chile. Dem's frum de O-hi-o ribber, an' dey's sho' nuff bloods, dem—rale spotes!"

"Then lissen, Uncle Clay—lissen good!" The little form was trembling with eagerness, but her voice had never a quaver in its clear ring. "I heer'd 'em talkin', an' the' say the black 'un has 'formed on th' ole *stran-ger* an' the good lookin' 'un! He tole the boys they was *guv'ment* spies; an', Uncle Clay, th' shiners from th' stills is comin' to lynch 'em, an hour by moon!"

"Wa' yo' say'n, chile?" cried Wash, wide-eyed with surprise. "Wa' yo' talkin'? Gwine ter lynch Morse Kurnul an' Morse Nevee?"

"That's wot *he* said—the black 'un! And the t'other he made a sign to me to lissen; an' he spoke it all over!" the child answered, confidently.

"Well, hit jes do beat de debble, sho's yo' born!"

"Wot *kin* we do? Oh, Uncle Clay, *wot* kin we do?" the child pleaded eagerly.

The negro scratched his head slowly as he answered:

"Da's wot's a-puzzlin' dis ole nigga's currayneeyum dis berry minnit!"

Juny watched him nervously; glancing at the moon, now hanging her globe of silver well above the trees, her small hands twisted tight; but suddenly they unclasped and Juny clapped them together as she cried:

"I got it, Uncle Clay! I got it! You run an' saddle ther hosses. Run quick an' lead 'em roun' th' valley road behind th' bridge! There!" And the little hand pointed commandful toward the frowning bastions of rock, glooming over the cañon across the little foot-planks.

"Jesso, chile, jesso," the old man answered, quickly. "Da's de bess we'uns *kin* do." He started toward the cañon, paused and asked: "Look a-yeah, chile, who gwine to warn dem yonner?"



"I'll do that," the mite replied, bravely. "You run, Uncle Clay! Run fas' as you *kin*, or the shiners 'll git here 'fore you." And pushing the old man with eager little hands, Juny saw him started, then turned herself toward the house in a rapid run. Suddenly she stooped, seized an axe lying against the porch and ran back, dragging it after her.

"Better do this 'fore any come," she panted, hacking with axe, short-held, upon the wooden pegs that braced the planks. Rapidly, but laboriously, she moved the pegs; and, breathless now, ran back toward the house, rapping sharply on the door.

"Colonel! Mister! I say *stran*-gers, come out here, quick!" she cried.

"Who calls?" the colonel asked, throwing open the door.

"Why, child, what is wanted?"

"Snakes! I reckon *you* is!" answered the child, panting with haste and exertion.

"Will, my boy, come out here," the older man said.

"Something seems wrong."

"Well, I reckon ther' *is*!" Juny whispered, with wide eyes. "Say, you mus' git out o' here quick; you an' the good look'n 'un!" And as Browne came on the porch she approached him timidly, put her hand on his arm and looked up piteously: "Go, *quick*! please go," she pleaded. "Ther' ain't no time to waste to save yer lives!"

"Save our lives!" the young man echoed. "From what?"

"From hangin'!" Juny answered. "From lynchin' by the shiners from the stills!"

"Moonshiners!" the colonel exclaimed.

"*Um—um!*" panted the child, nodding her head. "'Them miners roun' here's all shiners. Them sports tole 'em ye be 'formers; an' ther' comin' to hang ye on the spy's tree."



"Ah! They are?" Will Browne answered, coolly, as he slipped out his revolver and tested the chamber. "But two can play at that game."

"No! Quit it! Ye can't," Juny remonstrated rapidly. "Ther's too many o' *them*, an' ye're only losin' time. I tell ye, ole man," and she turned pleadingly to the colonel, "the're desperate men an'll take desperate chances. Snakes! I know *you* ain't o' the runnin' sort," she added, confidently to Will Browne, "but now ther's nothin' else; ye *must* run!"

"The child is right, Will," Colonel Baylor said, quietly. "Fight is good, when it can win; flight is better, if one must."

"Hear him, *stran-ger*!" the girl cried, clinging to Browne's arm—"Ye ain't no coward, *I* know; but the ole man's right, sure! Cross that bridge; Uncle Clay 'll hev yer hosses ready 'hind them rocks. Take the river road an' ride straight to moonrise, and three hours 'll see ye safe in the settle-*ment*! And—Snakes! I'll never see ye' no more!"

Will Browne looked at the child, surprise and admiration struggling in his eyes, as he put his hand on the bright hair.

"What! Run off and leave you, Juny!" he said. "After saving our lives, at such risk! Why these ruffians would take their spite out on you!"

She shook her head confidently.

"Snakes! I'm the shiners' gal, I am," she said. "Wy, *stran-ger*, *I* ain't afeared on none o' 'em!"

Suddenly Colonel Baylor stooped impulsively and kissed the girl's brow.

"But, you come with us, Juny," he said, "and we will take better care of you than these men. You are too brave and honest to be left with ruffians like them. Come; be my child, in the place of one I lost!"

"Yes, come!" Browne repeated. "You shall have everything you want!"



Juny was silent an instant; her gaze on the ground, the thin brown fingers twisting and untwisting. Then she raised her eyes doubtfully to the old man and they wandered wistfully to Wilmot Browne.

But she drew back a step and answered bravely: "But I don't want nothin' cep'n to see ye 'uns safe. Please go! *Please* do!" she added, entreatingly. "Th' shiners 'll be here, ef ye don't!"

"Then you come with us," the colonel answered. "You say you want nothing. My child, you want care, education, dress—everything that love can give!"

Again the little brown hands laced tightly together, as though to crush irresolution.

"Clay loves me," she said loyally—"I *won't* leave Uncle Wash!"

Will Browne looked at his uncle. Then he said: "If you will come, Juny, Wash shall come, too. Shall he not, uncle?"

"That he shall!" the old man assented warmly. "The extra horse can carry him and you can ride behind Will."

"So come, Juny—my child!"

"I reckon—I—*can't*!" she answered, wavering.

They were nearly at the bridge. Will seized both her hands impulsively, as he cried:

"*Will* you come, Juny? Your answer decides us!"

But for reply, there rose from under the hill behind the inn a hoarse murmur, as of many voices. Even the swish of many forms breaking through the brush, came to the soldier's practiced ear.

"Quick! Th' shiners is comin'! Over the bridge or ye're gone, sure! Careful! Th' planks is loose! Keep 'hind them rocks till Clay sings; then throw the planks in th' gulch an'—*git*! I'll hold off th' shiners!"

On the narrow planks, in the bright moonlight—the black cañon yawning beneath him, Wilmot Browne stopped still.



"I can not leave you to such danger," he said. "I swear I will not go, unless you go, too. Juny, *will* you come?"

"I dunno, *stran-ger*," the child began, hesitating. "I reckon mebbe I'll——Hear 'em! *Quick!* Git across! Snakes! I'll come, too! Hide 'hind them rocks!"

It was none too soon that he obeyed, following the colonel across the swaying boards. From under the hill, the shouts grew loud and near; Kyle Hardy's voice distinguishable, as he led them on.

Juny quietly seated herself on the bridge planks; the bare little feet swinging over the cañon carelessly, but the childish face pale, earnest and full of purpose.





## CHAPTER V.

## JUDGE LYNCH HOLDS COURT.

As the child dropped on the bridge, Jack Rudd's long body reared over the crest of the steep path opposite the inn; and he strode into the open moonlight, staring about him curiously. As his eye fell upon the girl, he hailed her roughly :

"Hello ! gell. Wot be th' matter below yant?"

"Matter enuff, Jack Rudd," Juny replied coolly, rising from her risky perch and coming toward him. "Matter fur th' court, I reckon. Th' shiners is up. Them spotes tole 'em them *stran*-gers was 'formers, an' th' boys's comin' ter lynch 'em, on th' spy's tree !"

"Lynch 'em, be they?" growled the landlord, in no pleased tone. "Lynch 'em 'thout jedge-*ment*, eh? By th' Tarnal ! Ther'll be no lynchin' roun' yere, 'cep'n Jack Rudd hears th' case !"

And, with gesture determined enough to suppress even suggestion of contempt of court, he drew a long revolver from his hip and spun the cylinder round.

"Reck'n we'uns 'll hear them fax, 'fore the hangin' begins ! Waal, boys ! Wot's up ?"

The last words, in louder tone, checked a crowd of rough mountaineers and dingy covites, now surging from the shadows of the inn to the open, moonlit space. And, as they halted at the familiar voice, he repeated :

"Wot's up, I sa-ay ? Wot's you'uns's game ?"

The men hesitated for reply ; but Kyle Hardy stepped to their front, his port and dress contrasting strongly with the coarse shirts and muddy jack boots around him.



"The game is *spies*, Jack Rudd," he answered carelessly. "Informers, in government pay. We've got 'em penned, and hang they shall!"

A growl of approval ran through the rough group behind him. Rudd waited for it to die into silence before he said:

"I wus axin' my own boys, Coyote, an' the'uns be fitten ter anser. We'uns doan borry no *stran-ger's* tongue in ther mountings, an' like be we'uns kin do 'ur own hangin' wen'ts need be!"

"Oh! I'm satisfied, Jack," Hardy replied, doggedly. "But they'll tell you as I did, and don't you make any mistake. So, just to save time, I'll swing the necklace!"

As he spoke, with a black frown upon his face, the gambler strode toward the cañon. And, as he went, he uncoiled from his arm a strong hair lariat, finally throwing it skillfully over the branch of the solitary tree overhanging the bridge.

Rudd waited until the noose dangled over the deep gulch before he spoke. But the child passed, swiftly and unnoted, round the group and stood anxiously by the porch of the inn.

"Now, boys, things be a-ready, seems," Rudd said at last. "You'uns knows me, an' like you'uns knows th' Coyote, thar. Jack Rudd hes stood by the stills thick 'er thin. You'uns knows *that*. He'd swing a 'former quick'r'n wink. You'uns know *that*. But, by th' tarnal thunder! 'Fore ther's any hangin' done, things es got ter be sot reg'lar. Whar's th' proofs?"

A murmur of assent ran through the group, rough heads nodding as a "hear! hear!" to the speaker's point.

"Here's proof, I should say, and to spare!" Hardy cried, approaching Rudd once more. "A full description and map of the stills! See here!"

Once more his hand went into his vest and brought out the dingy pocket-book; and, hastily examining its papers, he chose one.



"Here! Hold this one second," he said, turning to Miles, who had slouched in behind the crowd.

The older man took the book mechanically, never withdrawing the extended hand into which his partner placed it. Then Hardy, slapping the document open with his freed hand, cried exultingly:

"See, Jack, it's on government paper, a regular report and signed Randolph Baylor! Here's proof enough for any man that wants——*to read it!*"

The men, moving eagerly forward to scan the paper, stopped as the last words fell from Hardy's lips. He watched the effect with a grim smile, knowing their illiteracy. But Rudd came nearer, examining the document closely.

Miles still kept his face full-turned to Hardy—his arm still outstretched with the pocket-book. Only the quickest eye of trained detective could have noted the almost moveless creep of his right hand under that extended left arm. Even that eye would have needed stronger light to catch the almost timeless gleam of a folded paper as it twisted from the book, seemingly of its own motion. But it did not drop to the ground. And the years of "deck-stocking" and of "discard-lifting"—which had earned Mr. Miles his widely-known soubriquet—were vindicated by that champion filch.

It fully justified that professional pride, speaking in his inward whisper to himself—

"Now, Jack Harrington, I've pretty near a king-full on you, anyway!"

Jack Rudd turned from his inspection of the paper.

"Boys, this 'ere do look bad," he said, grimly. "It do look reg'lar like. 'Ther's picturs o' th' stills an' o' th' secret roads; an' ther's a lot o' writin', too. An' as you'uns kin all see ther's the U. S. marks an' th' eegul all over on it."

The men craned their necks toward the document, Sanscrit to them; but an ominous growl went up that sent a shiver



through the girl at the inn porch.\* But the pale little face—bent eagerly ever toward the bridge—was set and firm as she whispered to herself:

“Oh, Lor’! Won’t Uncle Clay *never* cum with them hosses! Oh! ef I could only hear him sing!”

She listened with painful eagerness; but the only sound was the swelling growl of the lynchers, now grown blood-hungry in their wild ideas of justice.

“But I *kin* gain them *stran*-gers a leetle mo’ time!” the girl said suddenly; and, unnoticed in the shadow, she slipped into the inn door and shot the heavy bolt behind her. An instant later her lithe form slid through the furthest window, back upon the porch, just as Hardy turned to the mob and cried:

“Aye, boys! That *is* proof, and reg’lar, too! Now, have ’em out and swing ’em for it!”

“Hang ’un! Hang ’un!” echoed him in curdling chorus, as they turned to the house, headed by Jack Rudd with Hardy at his side.

“Clay ain’t a-singin’ yit,” Juny muttered. “Snakes! I *mus*’ gain time fur ’em!”

And slipping out of the shadows, she confronted them boldly in the full light.

“Sa-ay! Ye’ jes’ hold up a chance, Mistur Kioty!” she cried, in her shrill treble. “You ’uns be a bit too fas’, ben’t ye? Boys, you ’uns all know Juny never went back on ye! She’s the shiners’ gal, sure, and you ’uns knows she *never lied*! So, ’fore ye’ swing them *stran*-gers in thar, jes ask th’ Kioty thar if th’ ’formers writ that ’ar paper, how it cum’ in *his* pocket!”

“Why, you kid, I’ll ——” Hardy growled, with a spring toward her; but Jack Rudd’s iron grip was on his arm.

“By th’ ’tarnal thunder! th’ gell’s right!” he cried. “Sa-ay, how you ’uns cum wid ’em, Coyote?”



"Simply enough, boys," Hardy answered, turning to the other men. "Just hear *me* ——"

"No! You 'uns jes' hear *me*!" The high, clear, child-voice cut through the man's appeal, as Juny advanced. "You 'uns knows Juny—that she never lied! I *sa-ay* I overheard th' Kioty a-fixin' up th' plan. *He* writ them papers! Ax th' ole man; he'll tell th' truth!"

"No! Don't ask me! I can't remember!" Miles cried, quickly, thrusting the pocket-book back into Hardy's hand. Then he slunk away behind the crowd, casting a quick glance to the rear, as if for retreat at need.

"Damn such child's play!" Hardy roared, stuffing the book into his breast with his left hand, as he raised his pistol with his right. "Have the men out, and let *them* deny it, *if they can*!"

"That's reg'lar," Rudd answered. "It can't make no differ, but it's far enuff, boys, to let them *stran-gers* speak fur thes'selves!"

He stepped upon the porch, Hardy close at his side, and the now furious men crowding at the steps. As he did so, Juny moved rapidly toward the bridge, and as she passed, she whispered rapidly to Miles:

"*You'd* better git! They 'uns 'll kill ye! Over the bridge—*quick*!"

Miles needed no second hint. Seeing himself lost sight of, he ambled over the bridge and slipped around the rocks behind it.

"By th' tarnal thunder!" Rudd cried. "'Th' door be fast! Open thar! Open, I *sa-ay*!" And he hammered with heavy fist.

"Aha! The 'formers don't dare to show!" Hardy cried in triumph. "Boys, we'll smash the door and have them out!"

Seizing the axe Juny had used, the gambler sprang at the door, raining heavy blows upon it till the bolt gave way. In he rushed, closely followed by Rudd.



But, at that moment, Juny's dead white face lit up with joy, as the well-known voice, echoing from the frowning rock, startled the night with the knowledge that—

“De Lord Him lub Him nigga well!”

And that wild waif, the shiners' gal, dropped on trembling knees at the bridge edge, raising her little face as she whispered above :

“He's thar! Thank'ee, Lord! thank'ee. The *stran*-gers is safe!”

And, as that simple prayer went up, Hardy rushed from the inn, following Jack Rudd, who yelled :

“They've cut! Up, shiners, an' fin' 'em—live *or dead*!”

“There!” cried Hardy, passing Rudd and pointing with his pistol—“There! by the bridge!”

The baffled crowd turned sullenly and rushed for the narrow bridge. As sullenly they recoiled.

In the narrow pass opposite, three shining pistol barrels flashed back the moonlight. There stood the hunted strangers, between them a singular recruit—Mr. Tip Miles. And he showed memory enough to level an army six straight at Kyle Hardy, as he broke through the halting crowd.

“Juny, *come*! Cross quickly!” Wilmot Browne cried.

“Throw down th' planks! Don' min' me! Throw 'em down—*quick*!” screamed back the girl, her little hands tugging fiercely at the planks, moving them but little.

“Fools! The kid has tricked you!” Hardy cried, as he stood boldly before the leveled pistols. “Rally! and we'll hang 'em yet!”

Straining all her little weight, Juny had one plank upon the very verge. Breathless, she panted :

“Throw't down! Quick! Throw'm both down!”

“Then come across!” Browne shouted. And the two other men chorused :

“Come! Come quick!”



The child heard the gathering rush behind her. Not thirty steps away, she felt the tread of thirty hurrying men.

Never turning her head, with final, unnatural strength, she tilted one heavy plank. It tottered—tipped over—crashed down the cañon's side!

“Over! For your life, over!” screamed Browne, dropping on his knees and seizing the other plank with both hands.

With the surefooted lightness of the mountain goat, the girl tripped across the perilous run and was caught in Colonel Baylor's arms, just as Browne wrenched the plank around; sending it hurtling into the gorge below.

“Damn them! We're beat!” roared Hardy, checking himself with foot upon the very verge.

His pistol clicked sharply, as his arm rose to aim; but a strong hand struck it up and Jack Rudd cried:

“'Tek car' o' th' gell!”

The harmless bullet sped moonward, as the mountaineer turned to the others, adding:

“Scatter, boys! Try an' hed 'em off, below yant!”

The opposing party disappeared behind the protecting rocks, speeding toward their horses on the sandy road below. And thence, Clay's voice floated to the ear of the baffled gambler; assuring him that he was:

“Wukkin' like de debble,  
Fur mitey leetle *p—a—y!*”



## CHAPTER VI.

## AMONG THE PERSONALS.

Six years had been added to this century, since the night the Coyote missed his prey in the Shiners' Gap; years freighted with import to the actors in that brief, if sensational, drama.

Juny—formally adopted by Colonel Baylor, to the intense disgust of his sister, Mrs. Beverly Baylor Browne—had been placed at the best schools in New York, as soon as her progress under his own eye had warranted. The old man had watched every development, under the girl's new life, with jealous love, for her true frank nature had wound itself closely about his heart.

Replacing the daughter he had so tragically lost, he worshiped the girl with a devotion which he almost felt disloyal to the memory even of the wife he had idolized. And, now nearing womanhood, he felt she was all-in-all to him.

On Juny's account, Colonel Baylor had over and over postponed the foreign voyage recommended by his doctor; but the summer before, Wilmot Browne had received an ugly arrow-wound through his shoulder, in an Indian fight.

The surgeons said a sea trip was needed; so uncle and nephew had passed several months abroad, returning only the morning we meet them here.

The young captain, a trifle pale, but manlier and handsomer than before, lounged easily on the sofa of a handsome library, in a Lexington-avenue mansion.

Near him stood a slim, keen-eyed man of uncertain age. The very pink of neatness and style in every detail of his dress, there was yet something in the close-shaven face—as



well as in the manner of his visitor—that might have shown the practiced judge, at a glance, that he was scarcely “of society.”

Under extreme ease of pose and glibness of speech, Captain Hunter Beagle could not successfully hide that singular something, which Mrs. Knickerbocker might have called—“*Je ne sais quoi* ;” but which—as she would most emphatically have declared—was not “*savoir faire*.”

“Yes, Cap’n Browne, you return from Vyenner just on the nick of time,” Captain Beagle was saying. “Your delay for the next steamer might have been too late. Not that I should have lost my men,” he corrected himself, quickly. “That isn’t *my* way. But I might not have caught them *both* at once!”

“Then you really have them?” Browne jumped from the sofa, in strong excitement.

“Oh, come! Cap’n, you’re moving *rather* fast,” the other answered, coolly. “Haste spoils delicate work, you know. *May* do for a beginner, but never for an ——— artist!”

“Then they are not arrested?”

“My dear sir!” Beagle commiserated gently. “Why, *that* would be worse than haste; it would be weakness! Can’t arrest without a charge; charge won’t hold without proof. Conspiracy always wins in the courts, and forgery is no case without witness to act, or to benefit from results of act. But, I tell you what I *have* got ———”

“The proof, at least?” Browne again broke in.

“There! You’re hasty again,” responded the imperturbable Beagle. “What I *have* got is ——— a clue! Six days ago this appeared among the personals.”

He handed a newspaper to Browne, his forefinger indexing the place, and the latter read aloud:

“‘*Wolf: If in New York still, I will trade papers for coins. J. P.*’ Well! If that’s your clue, it seems a pretty slim one!”



"That's hasty again; go slow," Captain Beagle answered. "What does '*J. P.*' stand for?"

"Many things; Jupiter Pluvius, for instance," Browne answered, with a yawn.

"Yes; *item*, for Jackpots; and '*Wolf*' is another form for Coyote." The detective took out a cigarette, rerolled it carefully and strolled to the mantel; while Browne answered eagerly:

"That's so! But they mean other things besides."

The searcher after evil lit a match, inhaled a long cloud of smoke and blew it through his nose; then answered slowly:

"Not this time. Sunday this appeared: '*Jackpot: Am ready to see paper and go coin better. K. O. T.*' Both our men are here; for to-day this appeared: '*Wolf: To-morrow night. T. Square; great paper sale. J. Pots.*' To-morrow night I'll nab them—perhaps!"

"Arrest them without fail!" Browne cried, rising—"We'll have both ——"

"Discharged? Quite right." Beagle finished quietly. "Dear me! Cap'n, you hunt Indians better than thieves. What we want is the proof; not the men. We can get *them* at any time. We must have those papers, *whatever they are*; and we must, if possible, find them on the men. That will be —— proof!"

"You have shadowed the men, of course?"

"I think I have—both," Beagle answered. "One of them scarcely tallies with your description, though; as you'll confess the first time you meet him out."

"Meet him out?" Will Browne echoed.

"Yes; you can't very well miss him, I think. It may give you an electric shock, when you do! As for the other—if I'm onto the right man—the singularity of *his* employment will give you a cold *douche*! Why, he actually is on



familiar terms with—— *S-sh!* I hear the ladies coming. Remember; female tongues are dangerous, one's family the worst confidants!"

And, the modern Solomon picked up his hat, placing his finger on his lip, as the lady entered the room with a swirl, followed by Colonel Baylor.

Mrs. Beverly Baylor Browne—formerly of Colepeper Court House, but later of Murray Hill—was a woman of excellent heart, unhappily dominated by a somewhat weak head. The colonel's half-sister, she had inordinate pride in her really excellent family, coupling with it intense ambition to shine as a social light before the "four hundred." This her brother's liberality easily permitted; for, left a widow soon after Browne, *pere*, had lost the last dollar of her patrimony on the race track, she had been recognized ever since as the head of the Baylor household. This comprised herself, Wilmot, one young lady daughter and, last and not least, the colonel himself.

Indeed, it was delightful to see the way in which he was henpecked by both women in small matters; how quietly, and without protest, he took the reins into his own hands in all serious ones.

A stately, handsome woman—not scorning aid from high art, at times—Mrs. Browne made style her fetich and society her temple; and, never guilty of a rudeness, she could look through a doubtful comer with her double gold eyeglass in a manner that never failed of its result.

"Of course, brother Randolph, if you insist;" she was saying, in some excitement as they entered, "only it seems so unconventional—quite *baroque*, in fact! Juniata is a child, has never made her *début* and —— Wilmot, my son, pardon us. I did not see that you had visitors."

"Oh, only an old friend, madam," Beagle said, quickly.



"Yes, mamma ; an old friend," Browne echoed. "Major—a—um—"

"Grabbett!" whispered Beagle, to the rescue.

"Grabbett!" Will echoed, staring. Major Grabbett, of—a—of——"

"Chicago!" Beagle again prompted, behind his hat.

"Major Grabbett, of Chicago, mamma ; my uncle, Colonel Baylor," Will said, mechanically.

"Delighted! Madam, I'm sure!" Beagle cried warmly, seizing Mrs. Browne's hand and shaking it briskly, to her infinite surprise. "Delighted, Colonel! Yours truly. Always glad to meet military men. Not in the regular service myself: N. G. ! National Guard. We're getting up a grand competitive drill, and I called on Browne here to get him as a judge! Glorious position! Dangerous as base ball umpire, though! Won't intrude longer. Ta-ta, Browne! Colonel! Mrs. B!" And the detective bowed himself out.

"Rather a singular person, your friend, Wilmot, my son!" Mrs. Browne said, the double-barreled glass at point-blank range. "Not the best form, *I* should say ; but military manners, I presume. But, brother, *should* you decide on to-morrow's trip to Browne Beach——"

"I *have* decided," the colonel answered quietly. "To-day, Will and I will want Juny all to ourselves, bless her! To-morrow we will take this jaunt, though I hate to see that cottage again, since——"

"Juny should be here soon," Will broke in quickly.

"In an hour," Colonel Baylor answered ; drawing out his watch impatiently. "I can scarcely wait so long to see what change a year has wrought in our darling!"

"I was at the school last week," Mrs. Browne said. "Really, I find Juniata improved each time I see her. She is gaining style, and will only lack—family!"



"She will lack *nothing!*" her brother retorted quickly. "She *has* 'family,' sister! I have made her *my* daughter; and I have the right to hope that you will treat her as yours!"

"I will *try*, brother Randolph," the lady answered with a stately bow. "I really like the girl; although she *is* so untrained—so unconventional—so unlike Augustine! But, I fully realize, brother, that your generosity makes it possible for the Beverly Baylor Brownes to resume their proper position in society. I must love Juniata, for your sake!"

"Well, you may begin that way, mamma," Will answered, quietly, as he passed his arm around the stately form. "But, unless I much mistake you both, you'll soon love her for her own—" "Hello! 'There's Gus," he finished, as a cheery laugh rang through the hall. Then the opposite door closed with a bang, and a tall, handsome girl bounded into the library.

Augustine Beverly Baylor Browne—affectionately cut down to "Gus"—had features that would have been aristocratic, but for their ruddy health and extreme good nature. Her figure seemed to be perfect, so far as it was hinted through a wrapper of exaggerated cut, in pale, soft blue stuff, bubbling over with pleats and pocket flaps. And, running into the room, Gus kissed her uncle and brother with resounding smacks; then spun round and round, holding out the strange garment wide.

"Like it, bud?" she cried, at last, breathless. "Isn't it just jolly crimp?"

"Augustine!" reproved Mrs. Brown. "Why *will* you use those dreadful, unconventional forms of speech?"

"But it *is* crimp! Isn't it, bud? Designed specially for me—not another like it in New York—by Michael Angelo Lake."



"Well, it ought to be 'crimp,' with that name behind it," Will laughed. "But who is Michael Angelo Lake?"

"Lor'! Bud! Don't you read the papers? Why he's my very last and best and dearest; the new rage; the art evolutionist. He gives awfully *de*-lightful lectures on dress and cookery and Sunday-school decoration. Why, he teaches us how to walk and wink and faint gracefully! Yes, bud; *he* designed this dress!"

"He did? Well, you're right, Gus. He is an evolutionist. Why, I'd wager that there isn't a dress like that in all of Europe!"

"Thank you; I *knew* there wasn't! And he cuts all his own clothes; and they're just too crimp for anything. What's that, mamma?"

"He gives me a shudder always," Mrs. Browne was saying. "I much prefer Augustine's encouraging Colonel de la Plata. He is a Brazilian of family and of —— great wealth. You will admire him, brother; he has style."

"Awfully *bad* style, then," pouted Miss Browne. "He isn't half as nice as M. A."

"He has the two great essentials," the mother retorted with emphasis—"birth and money. Without these what *can* one expect in married life?"

"Happiness—perhaps," Will replied, dryly. "If ever I marry, mamma, it will be the woman herself, not her great-grandmother. And as for money buying hap——"

"Wilmot, my son!" cried horrified Mrs. Browne. "You shock me! Such unconventional heresies would soon admit all classes into society!"

"Not a bit of it!" Colonel Baylor retorted bluntly—"Much more likely to keep the most objectionable class of all out of it——Well, Clay?"



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE BLOSSOM OF THE BUD.

At the door, as Colonel Baylor spoke, appeared the tall, lank form of the "hymin" singer of the Shiners' Gap. Scarcely more grizzled in six years interval, the negro was a metamorphosed man in his sleek broadcloth, shining collar and oozily-greased hair; and his stately pomposity became a traveled gentleman, who was "de kurnel's pussnul wally-dee-sham," fresh from Vienna.

But through Wash Clay's stateliness shone out huge delight. His eyes rolled wildly, his long legs shook and he gasped with haste—

"*She's* a-comin', Morse Randorf! Missy Juny's a-comin'. I seen de kerrige tun de cornah!"

Down the stately hallway to the front door flew the black, followed by the family quartette, just as a cab rattled up.

Scarcely letting it stop, before the driver even began to descend, a tall, graceful girl bounded out, bringing with her a small avalanche of bundles, satchels and hat-boxes that rolled about the pavement. With a wild rush for the steps, she clung tightly around the colonel's neck, crying between loud-resounding kisses:

"*So* glad! You dear—dear old dad! *So* glad you're back!" Then she held him off by the shoulders and gazed with brimming eyes: "Oh! How I *have* missed you, *darling* old dad! And Will, too! I hardly recognized that new moustache! No—no! Will!" she added, holding out both hands, but dodging her head from his kiss. "No, I'm not a little girl any more!"



"Yes; the same frank, true little girl," the colonel said. "Not one bit changed; only prettier!"

"Not one bit changed, Juny," Will repeated; "and so much prettier!" and he still held both her hands.

Two bright red spots suddenly rose to the girl's cheeks, gradually spreading over brow and neck, as she released her hands gently, saying:

"I hope I'm not changed, dad, darling. But I'm nineteen, now, you know."

"Most unconventional—in the public street!" Mrs. Browne fretted to Augustine. "Come in, my dear Juniata! How d'ye do?"

"Oh, Mrs. Browne! And Augustine! Oh! *Isn't* it nice to have them home ag—Goody! You good old European Clay!"

Suddenly the beaming eyes had caught the old negro—his arms piled with recaptured bundles, his face aglow with joy—as he ascended the steps.

"You dear, good old Uncle Wash!"

Both the little fur-tipped gloves stretched out to the down-trodden national ward, causing fresh unconventionality for Mrs. Browne's dismay.

Down again tumbled bandbox and satchel, as Washington Clay, for once, forgot his state and was only "de ole nigga" again. Seizing both little hands in his great, wrinkled paws, the faithful old negro cried:

"Gord bress da' chile! Nuffin' gwine ter spile *her*, sho's yo' born! Yah! yah! *yee-e-ah!*" And the sacred precincts of Murray Hill echoed once more to the profaning expression of a natural emotion.

At last, back in the cozy library, Mrs. Browne's lips touched Juny's forehead, as she said:

"You are welcome, Juniata. Nothing could bring so much joy to brother Randolph."



"To us *all!*" the colonel said with emphasis. "In your own home, my daughter, all love you alike. *Your aunt* will be a mother to you."

"I shall certainly *try*, my dear," Mrs. Browne replied; adding *sotto voce* to Gus: "Not bad looking, when she acquires style!"

"I'll certainly be your sister, dear!" Gus cried, by way of response and kissing Juny warmly. "I think you're just *too* crimp for anything!"

"Thank you, Augustine. Oh! Bother! I must call you Gus, too," Juny said, frankly. "I think we two will be great chums. Oh! Dad, it is just too sweet to be at home!"

"But, my darling, you surprised us. You must have taken the earliest train?"

"Yes, dad! Of course, the very minute I got your telegram I packed a satchel, grabbed a hat-box and flew to the station, without one word to Old Press!"

"To whom, Juniata?" Mrs. Browne asked.

"Miss Friller, our principal. The girls call her 'Irrepressible'—Old Press for short!"

"What a *crimp* name!"

"What a rum set you girls are!"

In the same breath, Mrs. Browne's pair had thus exclaimed; and promptly that mother of Gracchi reproved:

"Wilmot! Augustine! *Pray* use more conventional forms of speech! Those are in shocking taste!"

"I should have been here sooner, dad," Juny rattled on—heedless of the lesson in good form—"but for an accident, almost a serious one. A little boy—oh, *such* an odd little fellow, tried to dodge before our horses; slipped and fell under their very feet. He would have been trampled horribly had not a man rushed in and saved him, at risk of his own life. And the man was even stranger-looking than the boy; such a funny, stubbly beard and a green patch over his eye."



"Goodness! How jolly!" Gus cried. "Oh! mamma, maybe that man was the——"

"Augustine!" broke in her mother, with unwonted quickness and severity, "You monopolize the conversation."

"And somehow," Juny went on, "the man's face reminded me of somebody I know; but I guess it was only some picture in *Puck*."

"But, mamma," persevered Gus, with a pout, "I'm confident the man must be——"

"Augustine! *I insist!*" Mrs. Browne again cut in quickly. "One can not take interest in actions of the common people."

"But, aunt, that boy did!" Juny answered, with a ringing laugh. "He called the old man a double-barreled life-preserver!"

"How awfully crimp!" Gus cried; "and, mamma, I'm just *sure* the man must be——"

Again Mrs. Browne incised her sentence sharply—"Junyata, I will prepare your room! Augustine! Come with me; I need your assistance specially."

"I'll go with you, too, sister," the colonel said, kissing Juny tenderly. "Our little girl's room must be perfect before she sees it. The best in this house is not good enough for her."

"Dear—*darling* old dad! How I *do* love him!" Juny cried, as the three left the room. "How well he looks, too! But, Will, it seems to me you look serious. Is anything troubling you?"

"Do I look serious, Juny? Well, perhaps ——" He hesitated only an instant, then added, frankly: "Juny, I think I can trust —— *you!*"

"Think so? Well, I should hope you could!" the girl answered, with a shade of mortification.



"I will!" he rejoined, frankly. "You are not changed; you are the same brave, quick-witted Juny who saved us in the Shiners' Gap! You remember that night?"

"Could I *ever* forget it?" the girl answered.

"And those two men, the gamblers?" he went on, and the girl nodded earnestly, her clear blue eyes fixed on his as he continued:

"They are in New York now and still plotting some harm to him; haggling over some papers."

"What can the papers be?" Juny asked.

"That puzzles the detective and me."

"Well," the girl said, brightly, after a brief pause, "Old Stumper, who teaches us mathematics, says a straight line is the shortest distance. Why not ask dad?"

"Not for the world!" Will replied, hastily. "He grows nervous—has one of his bad turns—at the least allusion to his old life in New Orleans. You are a woman now, Juny, and you should know that the baby daughter, the only child of his idolized wife, both of whom you now replace in his affection, was drowned soon after his first bereavement. Uncle was sending the child to my mother; but none of us ever allude to her now. No, Juny, we must work in the dark, but we will work together!"

The girl held out her hand in frank, manly fashion, as she answered feelingly:

"Dear old Will, you know that to save dad even one moment's pain, *I'd give my life!* I think I'm no fool; I know I'm no coward! I am no city miss, and boarding-school has not educated *all* the pluck out of 'the shiners' gal!' So, Will, you can just look on me as —— a man!"

"By Jove! you shame the courage of many a man!" the young soldier cried in admiration; but he forgot to release the firm little hand she held out to confirm their pact. "We will keep our own counsel, Juny, and you—little girl as you



are—shall aid me to foil these self-same plotters, as you did six years ago!”

The girl looked bravely into his eyes, her own unflinching, yet full, reflecting some very tender memory. The sound of voices buzzed from the hall above and Juny's name was called.

Suddenly, Will Browne threw his arm about the girl, straining her close to his breast for one instant; then, as it released her, his lips met hers. It took but one second of time ere she broke away, her cheeks aflame, her breast heaving under the glow of that caress.

At the door she turned. Their eyes met.

In hers was no anger, only an arch reproach; but she held up her finger in warning, as she cried:

“Fie, Will! *That's* not the way to treat —— a man!”





## CHAPTER VIII.

## A VERY ODD VISITOR.

The Lexington-avenue mansion was very still. Will Browne had gone to his room to pore over memoranda and correspondence of the detective ; Juny was in her room, deep in talk of the past year with the colonel ; Mrs. Browne in hers, lecturing Gus on the advantages of family when allied to money.

The bronzed street door opened noiselessly, and a plainly-dressed man with stubbly beard and a patch over his eye—partly concealing the features—entered quietly and closed it behind him with easy confidence.

“ I surely saw Juny drive up to this door,” he said to himself, “ and I must speak to her ! How I have watched that gal since the old man took her in ! After all, what a blamed sucker I *may* be ; playing a marked card with ’nary sign on it ! Lady Lofty’s pride will die hard ; ” and an amused smile chased the worry from his hard, old face. “ But she dar’nt refuse, and I’ve got a desperate game of bluff to play to-morrow night. One look into the gal’s eyes will give me nerve ! ”

A step was at his side, and Clay’s voice began :

“ Look a-yeah, sah ! Da’ ain’ no way fur to mek yo’ enterree en a leddy’s — Lor’, gorry ! Morse Jackpots ! sho’s yo’ born ! ”

“ Wash Clay ! the devil ! ” muttered Mr. Miles ; but he added boldly, aloud : “ What do you mean, Charles Augustus ? You never set eyes on me before ! ”



"Jesso, Morse Tip Miles, jesso!" the negro answered. "Wash Clay's eyes *is* sot, sho' 'nuff; but he nebber furgit ole frens, ef dey does war new close; yah-yah-*yee* ——"

The well-remembered refrain was cut off before its climax by a heavy hand over Wash's mouth.

"Curse you! Don't raise the neighborhood!" Miles growled. "Here; keep your darned jaw closed, and take this!"

He slipped a bright dollar into the negro's hand; and, as he hesitated to pocket it, asked:

"Now, what in the devil brought *you* back?"

"Wa' brung me back? Wa' yo' spouse brung me? But look a-yeah, Morse Jackpots, wa' yo' want in dis yeah house?"

"Visiting," Miles replied, with a grim smile. "Here; take this card to Mrs. Browne!"

"Tek *wot*?" Clay's eyes opened wide in wonder.

"She'll see me," Miles answered, quietly. "Take the card at once!"

Wash Clay took the card and turned away, without reply. Surprise seemed to have struck him dumb; and he reached the landing above before he recovered speech enough to mutter:

"Morse Jackpots with a kee-yard! Ob *dis* kine, too!"

Mr. Miles had builded wisely; for he had scarce seated himself in the parlor before Mrs. Browne sailed in. Her nose was in the air, her cheeks flushed, and she stood erect before him:

"Well, sir! You are here again! What do you want?"

"I want Juny. Oh! I know she's here, Lady Lofty, and I'm going to see her!"

"You are mad, Tip Miles! What could this young person possibly be to you? What tie *could* bind you to—*my* adopted niece?"



"That's my business," Mr. Miles responded, more easily than elegantly. "So, you just shuffle, cut and deal her out!"

"You—you—*person!* You are insolent!" Mrs. Browne stammered, not finding words for her wrath.

"Well, you've been blamed long finding it out, Lady Lofty! It's been over twenty years since you were first so fond of me. But, perhaps"—and he fell into his old manner—"I don't—quite—remember!"

"*Ruffian!* To remind me of that disgrace; and of—*my age!*"

"No use a-playin' your F. F. V. trumps," the man answered, quietly. "So quit bluffin' an' deal out the gal."

"Ungrateful vulgarian!" was the stately retort. "You know I have been liberal to you!"

"Well; yes, Lady Lofty," he answered deliberately. "You *were* pretty free with your brother's money. You *do* pay a pretty good salary, as manager of that worthless farm, to stop my mouth. But I ain't askin' favors to-day. I want to see the gal, an' see her I will, if you lose your age!"

"You shall *not* see Juniata!" Mrs. Browne was growing angry and raised her voice. Juny, tripping lightly down the stairs, caught her name, clearly spoken. Ere she reached the bottom, the next sentence fell clear and distinct upon her ear:

"Have I not suffered enough disgrace; hid our shameful connection—for years?"

"Disgrace! Shameful connection!" Juny repeated to herself. "What *can* she mean?"

The man's voice, from the drawing-room, answered mockingly:

"Then I'll proclaim it; and ruin you—in society!"

"Ruin her!" cried Juny; now near the door. "Oh! I must not listen!"



She turned hastily away ; but, at the same instant, Mrs. Browne and Tip Miles caught her reflection in the mirror.

“Juniata !” screamed the lady, flushing scarlet.

But, simultaneously, Miles extended eager, tremulous hands to her, crying : “Juny ! Little gal ! Come to your—”

“Do not *dare* to breathe that word !” Mrs. Browne interrupted him ; and Juny, standing irresolute in the doorway, raised her eyes to Miles’ face.

In her own, surprise replaced distress, as she muttered :

“Old Jackpots ? Here ! And familiar with Aunt Browne !”

“Oh ! Aunt,” and she turned pleadingly to the lady—“you can not know that this man is——”

“Hush, girl ! Breathe no word !” Mrs. Browne screamed to Juny. “Silence ! *if you value our reputation !*”

Amazement kept the girl’s lips closed ; but her eyes were full of pitying question. They moved from the woman’s face, changing, as they met the man’s, to disgust and defiance.

“*Don’t* look at me *that* way, gal ! Oh ! Juny, *don’t* do it !” And the gambler stretched out hands with yearning obsecration in them.

Society rose to its reserved rights. Mrs. Browne, with cheeks aflame and eyes that matched them, strode before Miles. She raised her hand with majestic sweep and commanded :

“Juniata ! Dare not listen to that —— person ! Go !” And she pointed to the stairway.

And society prevailed. Juny turned helplessly, in a slow, dazed way, and mounted the stairs. Her brain was a-whirl, and the broken fragments of quick-rushing thoughts escaped her lips :

“Tip Miles *here* ! Connection ! Reputation ! Shame ! What *can* it mean ?”

Then her face brightened for an instant, only to cloud again, as she murmured :



“ I will run and ask Will—— Great heaven ! And Will is *her son* ! ”

She was at her own door. She slammed it ; turned the key ; and, throwing herself upon her bed, buried the burning face in the pillow. Idea after idea was rushing through her brain until it throbbed fiercely.

Contemporaneous literature was not familiar to Juny ; and the “ situation ” had in it only horror—with no grotesque side—for her simple mind. Could Mrs. Browne, with her high birth and high breeding, be really in the power of this gambler cheat—this tramp ? If so, how horrible must be the accident that had given him this power ! What could *she*—simple, ignorant girl as she was—do to help the sister of the man who was more than father to her—who was mother of the only one who had been a hero to her healthy imagination ?

Juny dared appeal to neither ; and the woman’s own terror of exposure—so real and palpable—gave no hope of explanation from her. So, agitated and helpless, the girl lay perfectly still ; plan after plan forming itself in her brain, only to be as promptly dismissed.

Gradually, these ideas formed themselves into fantastic shapes ; grew vaporous and spread into giant forms as hazy and as hideous as the Genius of the Lamp, appearing to Aladdin. Then they mingled into smoky blackness, little by little floating away and leaving her busy brain as blank and peaceful as an infant’s. For Juny had the healthful body of youth, as fit sheath for purely healthful soul ; she had risen at dawn, traveled many miles and had her nerves at unusual tension.

So, she slept profoundly !



## CHAPTER IX.

## A DRAMATIC LEADING MAN.

Mrs. Browne turned upon her strange visitor, as Juny mounted the stair. His stupid placidity of manner had returned, and he was sitting comfortably in a spring rocker.

"And now, sir!" she cried. "Having almost exposed me, *will* you leave my house?"

"Maybe I will, Lady Lofty," the man replied coolly—"when you get one!"

The lady crossed the room. Her hand was on the bell, as she answered:

"Very well. I am about to ring for my brother!"

"Your brother! Is *he* back?" Miles cried, starting to his feet.

"Wilmot and he returned this morning," she replied.

"That nigger! I might have known!" Miles muttered. Then he added, to her: "He is in New York? In this house? Then I will lose my place?"

Mrs. Browne deigned no further reply to these rapid queries than a stately nod. Society had the upper hand now; and he hurried on:

"Then, there is no time to lose! Woman, your cursed folly nearly caused ruin to you all! Now, don't you dare to hint one thing about me to him. Remember!"

And Tip Miles strode up and down that elegant drawing-room, muttering to himself:

"Learnt it just in time, by the 'tarnal Jackpot! Now, I must meet Kyle Hardy — *to-night!*"

But excitements were still in store for Mrs. Browne that day. For, even as she stood with irresolute hand upon the



bell, Henry Washington Clay appeared, as though in answer to the soundless summons.

"Look a-yeah, Morse Jackpots!" he cried, in a voice hollowed by surprise, "Dere's a werry onplesunt sort ob a boy a-huntin' fur yo'."

"A boy, too! Here?" Mrs. Browne sniffed, wrathfully.

"Jesso, Missus, jesso! He jes' describe Morse Tip fussrate, an' say he see 'um cum in dis yeah doh, sho's yo' born!"

"Do not admit him!" Mrs. Browne commanded, loud.

"Lor', gorry! He dun 'mit hisself!" grumbled the negro; and a singular looking boy brushed by him and stood in the doorway, swinging his crownless hat with a wild flourish.

A noteworthy boy, too, in some regards. Of that uncertain age which the poverty-stamped faces of great cities leave doubtful between fifteen and twenty-one, he was lithe and muscular, the freedom of his long limbs not wanting grace. Coarsely as he was dressed, there was strange absence of rags in the patched clothes, whose cleanliness sorted ill with phantom shoes a world too large for his feet. But his face was marked enough, with its keen, shrewd expression and intelligent quickness of eye to demand attention; and his crisp, curly hair was neat beyond precedent in the New York *gamin*.

The ill-assorted pair stared at the boy with different eyes. Miles showed in his that sort of free-masonry bred only in the ultimate Bohemia. Mrs. Browne's divided their expression between curiosity and horror.

"All kerect, guv'ner! All right, mos' grashus leddyship," the newcomer exclaimed, unabashed, but not disrespectfully. "It's me, honly me!"

Mrs. Browne only gasped; but the boy, striking an attitude, spouted dramatically:

"'That she *is mad*, 'tis terrue!'"



“ ‘ ‘Tis terrue, 'tis pity, an' pity 'tis, 'tis terrue !' Yes, guv'-ner, I seed yer step inter this yere pallis, an' jest dropt in ter thank yer fur savin' my life !' ”

“ Oh ! That's all right, my boy,” Mr. Miles replied, philosophically. “ It's of no consequence.”

“ No ? My neck ! *Ain't* it ? ” the boy returned. “ Well, it mayn't be ter nobody else, but yer *kin* speckerlate it's werry conweniunt ter me ! ”

“ *Dreadful* little boy ! ” gasped the mistress of the house. “ Who *are* you ? ”

“ Lawrence Forrest Macready Barrett Irving Miggs, least-ways Larry, fur short ! ” responded the intruder. “ Yer see, my mother, she's connected wid der perfesh. She's rag-wringer fur the Lyceum thea-*tur* ! She's a laundress on high Delsarteen princerpuls, she is ; so she named me arter th' stars. Some o' th' kids calls me Hedwin Boot ; but I warns 'em to shoot nicknames or ther'll be a wacancy in the ranks o' th' perfesh ! ”

Mrs. Browne's effortful dignity was wofully diluted with curiosity, as it ejaculated :

“ *Dreadful* little boot-black ! ”

“ *Dreadful little*, yer can estimate ! ” Larry responded promptly. “ Boot-blacks is *played* ! Wy, ther's a boot-black in hevery comedy-dramy of wital contemmerary huming interest, by a native Hamerikin playwright. No, *ma-am* ! In my hopinion, boot-blacks is low ! ”

Mrs. Browne rang the bell, as she exclaimed :

“ Child ! You're a monstrosity ! ”

“ Ye're off ; I hain't. I'm a dimmycrat ! ” responded Master Miggs, blandly. “ But I ain't arter no office, I tell yer. I'm in ther *perfesh* ! ”

“ Washington,” Mrs. Browne said to the appearing negro, “ show these persons out ! ”



"Look a-yeah, Morse Jackpots," Wash said, with a wave of his hand, "de maddum, she's 'spectin' cumpney, an' ud like to hab de use ob dis departmunt kin' o' temperrerry!"

Larry stared at the negro, then at Miles. Striking a great pose, he cried:

"Never min' *us*, Agustis Siezer! We kin fin' our way 'thout th' light o' *yer* eyes. 'Stan' not upun th' order o' *yer* goin,' but *git*, at *wunst*!"

Mrs. Browne turned to Miles:

"I insist upon your going instantly. I hear my brother moving overhead. He will be down to lunch. *Will* you leave or not?"

"Yes, I will, Lady Lofty," Miles replied, passing into the hall. "Come along, Larry; the lady will set up the lunch!"

"Kerect, guv'ner! *Yer* may dissemmerate," the boy answered. "I ble'eve I *kin* surround a weal pie!"

"Little boy! Horrid little boy!" ejaculated the beaten Mrs. Browne. "If you speak that way, *where* do you expect to go?"

"'Ter Congris', *yer* bet *yer* socks! I'm trainin' now!" And with these hideous words still ringing in her ears, the lady of the mansion heard the front door slam as she sank exhausted in a chair.

"Well, you kind o' riled Lady Lofty," Miles remarked to the boy, as they turned toward Madison Square.

"*She's* all right! 'Ther' hain't no harm in *her*!" Larry chirped back. "Good 'art, but no muscle!"

"And so you're an actor?"

"Lor'! no; not yit! I'm honly a *leadin' man*!" the boy answered. "You see, guv'ner, no feller's an *actor* 'till he's ben on de road wid a fly-snap an' beat five hotels by follerin' his trunk outen three-story back, by de bed cord! But, I'm in trainin'—Hi am!"

"Then you do act plays?"



"Yer *kin* certify! I does the lead an' Pete he does t'hevies, in ther Tompkins Square Grand Opera House comberna-*shun*! Yer jist orter see us die—wid der lime-light on an' de orchestra a-playin' a boss song-an'dance! *Sa-ay*, guv'ner! Didn't yer never see a combina-*shun* leadin' man?"

They were crossing the square and Larry—quite regardless of publicity in rehearsal—dropped into song. Not unmindful of the proper breaks, walk-around and clog steps, he sang in not unpleasing voice:

"If yer want'er pull the dollars, send for me,  
I'm the slickest leadin' man, ye'veer see!  
I'm fly an' I guess I'm upter snuff!  
I'm chock full of 'I' and 'me'—  
As an artist oughter be—  
Wen he feels he's exactly good enough!  
For I *am* a leading man!  
Oh! Yes!

"I'm a combina-*shun* leading man!  
I smash all female hearts,  
When I play th' lovers' parts—  
For I *am*—a—leading man!"

"There's more on it?" he continued, interrogatively—  
"Nineteen wersedes an' all de dances!"

"That'll do just now. You see I'm not in the managing line," Miles answered; adding to himself: "This boy is sharp and seems solid. He might be of use."

Master Miggs was busy trying a clog-step on the asphalt.

"Say, Larry!" Miles suddenly broke in upon his study.  
"Suppose there was a fellow I wanted to ——"

"Trot him out! O! Show'm to *me*! I'll go f'r'im, you may rumernate!" Larry cried, breaking off his rehearsal and falling into good sparring pose. "Oh! I'll erec' a mansard roof over his top-story bay winder! That's mer name!



Jest show'm ter *me*!" And he landed a vicious left-hander into space.

"But, suppose he was a dangerous fellow; desperate? Miles queried, with a nod of approval.

"Ho! *Hi* know; one o'them nickel-plate, copper-back frauds, wot hides 'hind dimind pins an' felt hats, hin hevery Himerikin Border Dramy! Lor'! Guv'ner, *they* ain't dang'rus—outen th' cast!"

"You'll do!" Mr. Miles responded confidently. "Where could I find you, when needed?"

"Allers roun' Tompkins Square, near th' Gran' Opery House. That's down the cellar, next ter Scheifferlein's *bierhaus*, secon' door frum de corner. Say, guv'ner!" and Larry went down deep in his pocket—"I hain't got m' order book handy; but yer kin jest cum' in any time. I'll mention it t'our treasurer an' he'll chalk yer hat—*sure*!"

"So you've got a treasurer?"

"Yer kin specerlate! Th' Comberna-*shun* Acters' Per-teektiv' Assosya-*shun* an' Civ'l Servus Treasury Fund, fur mentil, morril an' mutechurl improve-*ment*!"

"Well, then, put that in the treasury," Miles said, handing him a dollar.

The boy hesitated a moment; then took the piece and pocketed it as he answered coolly:

"Stamps? Look-a here, guv'ner, I warn't fishin' arter *that*, yer kin repose! I only cum' ter thank ye' fur savin' me from de hosses. Howsomedever! Ye see *biz* hes bin tollable light at th' box-office, this run; an' nex' week we're goin' to put on 'Ortheller.' Hit's a *sure* card; jest *hauls* 'em in!"

"All right, Larry;" the new Mæcenass answered, as they passed into Broadway. "I'll drop round to-morrow night and see ——— By th' eternal Jackpot! Wonder if he twigged *me*?"



Mr. Miles interrupted himself suddenly and hastily turned from the crossing as a stylish brougham, with liveried driver, almost brushed him in its rapid turn. In it sat an elegantly dressed, but black-looking, man pulling his drooping moustache, and apparently in deep thought.

"Guess he didn't! Seems to be living pretty well, though!" Miles muttered, as the brougham rolled out of sight. "Wonder what lay he's on now? Well, I'll know 'fore mornin', I guess, ef I don't lose the lead!"

The boy—with his shrewd eyes following the old gambler's—gently pulled his sleeve: "*Sa-ay!* Guv'ner, is *that* th' feller ye meant? Yer kind o' look it. See?"

Mr. Miles pulled himself together.

"Mebbe it be; mebbe it ben't," he answered in Delphic form; then stood thinking a moment before he added: "Larry, I guess I'll send a note by you. It's safer than these little red-caps, and then we'll separate for the present. I've an engagement with my lawyer. But I'll need you again. I guess I can trust you."

He studied the boy's face keenly as he spoke, then turned decidedly and approached a news-stand near, asking for a card and envelope.

"Yer *kin* truss me—th' whole hog!" the leading man responded, stoutly. "W'en yer grabbed them hosses's heads an' yanked me outen ther hoofs, it kinder closed yer mor'-gidge on my life, yer may estermate! 'Tis mine—'tis his'n!—an' has had slaves by thousands!"

"All right! *My* boy you are, when I need you," the other answered quietly, as he sealed the envelope carefully. "Now, take this to S. Mark's Place, and watch the number carefully. Put it in *the gentleman's own hands*. You have plenty of time. I don't think he's at home just now."

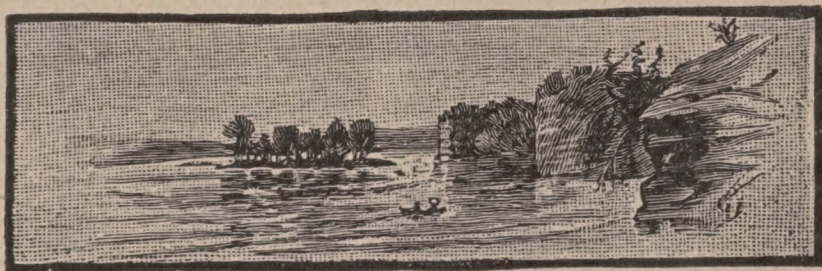
"Kerect, boss!" Larry responded, with a meaning wink. "He'll get it in his own pertickler, inderwideurl fist."



“You can stop for your lunch on the way,” Miles added. “But be sure and drink Lady Lofty’s health. She’s the queen of trumps and no mistake!”

“She’s a daisy an’ a puddin’,” Larry answered, swinging the rimless hat in farewell. “And sa-ay! Ef this yere note ain’t delivered to th’ queen’s taste, yer may jist remark— ‘Lawrence Irving Macready Barrett Forrest Miggs, I love yer, but never mo’ be hofficer o’ mine!’”

And, with this reassuring asseveration, the strange pair separated; the boy darting before a passing omnibus, while Tip Miles stood wrappd in thought deep enough to shut out the hurrying crowds about him.





## CHAPTER X.

## AN ART EVOLUTIONIST.

It was not a very cheerful party that assembled for the two o'clock luncheon. Mrs. Browne was even more stately than before, and her eyes, ever and anon, sought Juny's with curious questioning, though she spoke no word of the strange rencontre.

The girl's eyes gave no response. Their lids were rather heavy and swollen, "from sleeping too long," she explained; but their vision seemed turned inward and she spoke only in brief replies to interested questioners.

Will Browne was equally *distract*, his mind conjuring up all manner of issues possible to spring from the meeting of the conspirators the next night. And Gus was restless and expectant, constantly asking if that was not the door-bell.

At last, breaking an awkward pause, Mrs. Browne said:

"After all, brother, it *was* best to fix the excursion to May Bower farm for to-morrow. I really am anxious for you to inspect the property and judge of my stewardship in your absence."

"And I am willing to endorse it without inspection," he answered, "though I must show Juny the cottage."

"The cottage is, of course, *precisely* as you left it; but I should have pulled down the old farm-house had not the manager demurred," Mrs. Browne said.

"And you just *must* interview that agent, Uncle Ran," Gus cut in. "He's the very primest factor ——"

"Augustine!" again incised the maternal voice; this time very sharply. "There will be room in the boat for one gentleman. Why not ask Colonel de la Plata?"



"For two reasons, mamma," Gus replied, not unrebellingly. "He isn't one bit crimp, and I've already written to ask Michael An—— That *is* the bell!"

This time Miss Browne was ahead of her mother, interrupting herself and rushing to the mirror to fluff up still more the bangs of her soft, fair hair.

Before she had completed that task to her own satisfaction, Clay entered with a card. Miss Browne pounced upon it, as she cried:

"I *knew* it! Now, you'll see *him*, Bud. Ask him in here, Clay; nobody minds Michael Angelo! He's one of the family!" And she tossed the card to her brother. He glanced at it with an amused smile, then read aloud:

"'Mr. M. Angelo Lake, Art Evolutionist and Lecturer upon the True.' Well, Sis, if he be as wonderful as his card, he *is* worth seeing! Show him in here, Wash."

"Jesso, Morse Will, jesso!" the negro answered; but he muttered as he strode away: "But he *doan'* look like nuffin I ebber see befo', sho's yo' born!"

"Now you'll see him, Juny!" Gus exclaimed, in a great flutter. "Don't fail to twig his clothes. They're just *too* crimp!"

And, if the girl's dress he designed was novelty, his own was revelation! A combined Prince Albert and morning gown—of soft, drab material and reaching below the knees—hung loosely away from his not ungraceful figure. What pantaloons showed beneath it in placid greenish-blue, flopped loosely over square shoes of russet leather. A low, loose collar rolled over a bright cardinal tie and rested upon a square vest of pale blue satin. But the femininely delicate hands were faultlessly gloved, and the face—almost girlish and with clear hazel eyes, beneath a broad, low forehead, from which the long brown hair was brushed straight back—saved this singular make-up from absolute burlesque.



"How d'ye do? Delighted, I'm sure!" Gus cried warmly, as she took his No. 6 glove in her fair, neat hand. "This is my uncle, Colonel Baylor, Mr. Lake! My brother, Captain Wilmot Browne!"

And, as the newcomer greeted the colonel, she whispered to Will:

"Now, *isn't* he just too crimp for anything?"

"Entirely! Oscar Wilde, washed and combed!" was the cavalryman's whispered reply, as he turned to shake the proffered lavender No. 6.

"Miss Juniata Baylor!" Mrs. Browne said, with frigid stateliness.

"Another cousin?" Juny asked, gazing in much wonderment, but frankly extending her hand.

"No, *unfortunately!*" Mr. Lake responded, with emphasis and an admiring glance at Gus. "But an humble disciple of the true in Art and a worshiper at the shrine of the Beautiful, nevertheless! Delighted, Mrs. Browne," he added, earnestly, "to see you in such a becoming light! Permit me, however, to temper its tone somewhat. Ah! There! Now, that is better!"

He turned to the window, rearranging the folds of the curtains; pausing to look back at the ladies, under his hand, as he spoke:

"There! See! We have the true pre-Raphaelite effect upon Miss Gustine's left temple! Ah! this is better! Now, you'll do very well, Mrs. Browne!"

"Thank you, Mr. Lake!" the lady last addressed replied, with all the metallic coolness of a cream-freezer.

"Is the man an upholster, aunt?" whispered Juny, innocently, her wide eyes fixed upon the visitor.

"Nothing half so respectable—only an ass!" Mrs. Browne replied, in the same whisper.

"Oh! you're a painter, eh?" the girl queried, aloud.



‘Heaven forbid!’ returned Mr. Lake, fervently. Nothing so crude, I hope! But I *do* use Art, to evolve result from the aimless working of the Old Masters. Occasionally I evolve some masterful idea in tone; *never* in color! I have here a trifle for Miss Gustine.”

He drew a rolled canvas from his deep pocket, holding it against the wall as he spoke:

“A symphony in asphaltum! A tone-study of Nature’s inharmonious omissions, without use of color; a flower-poem where everything is rhythmic, without distraction of story, verse or thought. Now, as this proves, color is crude—vulgar! Feeling, and the emotional collaterals of feeling, must be conveyed by expressiveness, rather than by expression! Suggestiveness is ever higher than suggestion; Art thus becoming the vehicle for the true innerness of soul! The eye-prism, when properly focused in the brain-lens, becomes powerful to supply perfected combinations of color—need from this tone base! A picture without color is a song without words; suggested perfection, instead of fruitless attempting of the unattainable! I name this study—‘Roses as they Ought to Be!’”

“Thank you for mentioning that,” Will said, gravely. “We will appreciate it so much better!”

“Oh! And it’s *really* for me? That *lovely* thing!” Miss Browne gushed. “How *can* you, Mr. Lake? Why, that gem is the one *all* the critics attacked so, after your last public evolution!”

“And how I pitied them!” Michael Angelo answered placidly. “One poor fellow declared that this tone-poem suggested ‘splashes of whitewash upon a retired pen-wiper!’”

“Can I get that fellow’s address?” Will queried, quickly.

“I never asked,” the artist answered absently, but more naturally; “for my very next public evolution netted me



over sixteen hundred dollars ! Standing room at 7:30 ! By which I mean," he added, in slight confusion, "that the evolution of the True, appealing to the aggregate, has no time to descend to the individualization of discussion. My Art, in its movement of the grand mass, bears with it the resistance from the ultimate atom !"

"You took first prize in flower-painting, my daughter," Colonel Baylor said bluntly ; "What do you say to Mr. Lake's roses ?"

"I can hardly say anything," Juny answered, with one of her bright smiles. "I am only an ultimate atom, dad."

"Praise freely," Mr. Lake said, gently, but with half-closed eyes. "Art has no sensitiveness and the True is rock-based ! Say what you, as a beginner at the threshold of the Beautiful, like in the Symphony."

"I never saw a symphony before," Juny answered, simply. "I have only heard them. Therefore, I could scarcely judge it, as that. But as a picture it does not convey anything at all. Professor McGilp taught us that the best art was the best reproduction of nature. Now, I was brought up in the woods and sunlight. I ought to recognize nature ; but I never saw anything like them growing anywhere !"

"Why, Juny !" deprecated Gus, "I'm *sure* I have."

"Then it must have been at night, against a dark wall—Lor', dad ! How rude you've made me ! I'm sure I beg your pardon, Mr. Lake, for telling the truth !"

"Juniata is wholly unconventional," Mrs. Browne broke in, with ill-repressed delight. "Surely, Mr. Lake, you must forgive her want of appreciation because of her candor."

"Naturally ! Miss Baylor is a nocturne in cold gray simplicity," he answered, letting the sketch slide to the floor and turning to Wilmot Browne : "Your sister tells me you have been in Italy—the nursing-mother of the true in Art."



Like most untutored travelers, of course, you fell in love with the Antiques?"

"No," Will answered simply, "but with one of the moderns."

"Was it a nude?"

"Oh, dear! No! She was always extremely well dressed."

"Apropos of dress," the truth-searcher continued, seemingly wholly oblivious of chaff, "I have just completed a little morning-gown study for Miss Gustine. It is an *andante* in full-moony greys and autumn-leaf browns, where a *crescendo* of cardinal leads to pleats of light blue, that carry the *motif* in the twinned octaves of harmonious tint!"

"How genuine! How ideal! Yet, how true in art!" Will cried. "It recalls that once, on the Bois de Boulogne, I was thrilled through my entire being by a combination costume, wherein the *motif* was synchronous and the air was carried by the twilled twaddle of homogeneous hyfalutin!"

"That's real mean!" Gus whispered, as the disciple said something to Colonel Baylor. "You're not one bit crimp!"

"But, sis," was the whispered reply, "that fellow would not tumble if the Vatican fell on him."

"I only called, Miss Gustine," Lake said, turning to them, "to acknowledge your kind remembrance about the yachting party to-morrow. Thanks!"

"Oh! welks!" the young lady replied. "We take the cars to the Sound, and if there's a nice wind it will be jolly crimp!"

"Yes; wind may be permissible in yachting," the evolutionist half-sighed. "But I hate sun. It is so glaring in tone; so hard and crude in results of shadow!"

"You don't seem to admire nature," Juny said.

"Scarcely," he answered. "Nature is so unskillful everywhere in her handling of contrasted color!"



"Oh! *what* a novel idea!" Gus cried. "Just too crimp for anything!"

"Well, ladies, I *must* take my leave. I am going to prepare an aquatic costume. I do hope it will be cloudy; for I have thrown together quite a little gem—a trifle of my own composition, combining suggestive mezzo-toned stuffs with cut harmonious to placid sea-tints on a shadowed-ocean noon."

And with an emphatic warning from Mrs. Browne that she started at noon, and that it was quite unconventional to delay a party, the apostle of the True in Art took his departure.





## CHAPTER XI.

## MUTUAL RECOGNITIONS.

Scarcely had the street door hidden Mr. Lake's retreating coat tails, when Will Browne's laugh rang out, loud and long. Indeed, so contagious was it that Juny joined in with a ringing peal of happy girlish laughter. Mrs. Browne's stateliness would not permit her a share in the chorus; but, for once, she did not check the ebullition; and the colonel's face showed his appreciation of the cause of merriment.

"What in the world are you two laughing at?" Gus queried, with a pout. "Tell a fellow, can't you? 'Tisn't one bit crimp to be selfish!"

Juny controlled her risibles so suddenly as to produce a fierce snort, and answered:

"I really can't say, Gus. I was laughing because Will did."

"And I," he chimed in, "was laughing at—*nothing*! But say, Gus, are there many men in society like Mr. Lake?"

"For society's sake, I hope not!" the colonel broke in.

"Why, after all, uncle," Will rejoined, "he is only a result. If society did not want such abnormalities, they could never grow upon it."

"He's no fool, anyway," the older man answered. "From the one thing he dropped naturally—that the abuse of critics paid him well—I believe he trades on his affectations; selling them to bigger fools than himself!"

"Quite right, brother Randolph!" Mrs. Browne exclaimed. "He sells more than his lisp and his twaddle. At all his 'Evolutions'—as he calls his lectures—he exhibits samples of just the proper stuffs for dress or house adorn-



ment. Of course, the creature is paid for it ; and he is really no better than a person in trade ! ”

“ I hope you are right,” the colonel answered. “ If so, it is more to his credit than anything I have heard.”

Mrs. Browne stared hard at her peculiar brother ; but she knew that tone and, waiving discussion, said :

“ But he is so dreadfully unconventional—so different, for instance, from Colonel de la Plata.”

“ But *who* is this Brazilian you speak of, mamma ? ” Will asked. “ Does he belong to the legation ? ”

“ Assuredly not, Wilmot, my son ! He is too immensely rich, and quite too elegant ! ”

“ He is mamma’s last Monte Cristo,” Gus put in pertly. “ She thinks the world is his ; but he isn’t one bit crimp ! ”

“ Has he letters or good introductions ? ” Will persisted. “ Or is he another —— result ? ”

“ He is feted by our best people ! ” Mrs. Browne bridled up—“ Wilmot, my son, I think I am quite capable of judging proper acquaintances, else I have wasted my life in society.”

As she spoke, the bell again sounded, long and loud ; and another servant entered the lunch-room with another card.

Miss Browne read it, with her pretty nose unusually tip-tilted :

“ “ *El Major Manuel Corramente de la Plata-y-Doro !* ” Pshaw ! I’m sick of him ! Please come in, mamma ! ”

“ Certainly not ! ” responded that Roman mother. “ Only gentlemen of the old school desire to see the mothers. But, Augustine, be *very* cordial to him, and remember that he has family —— and money ! ”

During this, the tall and elegantly-dressed man was looking complacently at his reflection in the drawing-room mirror. But an ugly smile showed the regular white teeth, through his black moustache, as he said to it :



"Now for a bold stroke! The old cat is sure not to show up. Fortune favors the bold; and everything favors *me* but the girl herself. Hang me! if her resistance has not piqued me into love—real love—for her! But, besides, the old lady is rich and that cursed old uncle will leave her half his fortune! Ah! Miss Augustine! How well you are looking!"

He bowed gracefully as he took the girl's hand, stood until she seated herself upon a small sofa, then dropped easily into the rather small space beside her.

"I am truly fortunate," he went on easily, "in finding you at home—and *alone*! But you seem rather wearied—a trifle *distracte*. Ah! Miss Augustine, I fear it is from late hours and too much of the german. Your friends can not afford to let you be careless of your health."

"No, indeedy! I'm not hurting myself," was the reply; and Gus looked rather yearningly at the door.

"But you still keep up your dissipation?" he persisted.

"Not at this season. I go scarcely anywhere but to teas and receptions with mamma," the girl answered, wearily. Then, catching her reflection in the mirror, she inwardly whispered to it: "He isn't one bit crimp! Awfully heavy on hand!"

"Were you at the Charlton wedding?" the visitor asked. "I did not go, you know. Lately, somehow, I can not bear weddings," he added, with a sentimental glance. "They make me feel my loneliness in the world. That loneliness I now ——"

"Oh! I just dote on weddings!" Gus interrupted, with sudden animation. "Why, the flowers and the dresses and the ushers are just *too* crimp—especially the ushers!"

"That is the superficial view; but, beneath it, I realize—*of late*—how few weddings are for love!" And the man sighed deeply.



"Gracious! How should *I* know?" Gus answered, growing bored again.

"Of course you do not," he rejoined. "*You* would never give your hand unless the thrice-blessed man had first won your heart!"

"I don't know ——" the girl began.

"I could swear you do!" He rose and stood before her; handsome, dark, sinister, as he looked down on her with fire glowing in his black eyes. "I could swear that *you* never would! That your pure woman's heart would abhor the idea of a lifetime of bondage to false vows! I know—I feel—that such a heart would famish without love! Oh! if I could only know whether that heart is still free!"

"Lor'! He's coming awfully near a pop!" Gus whispered to her mirrored self; but aloud she only said:

"*Gracious!* Colonel de la Plata!"

The black eyes still burned down upon her. Suddenly—and as if not hearing her reply—he exclaimed:

"Augustine! *Can* you find in it pity for one who deeply—No! do not turn away—who deeply, wildly—*loves you?*"

He stooped and seized her hand. She withdrew it abruptly; the slim slipper beating a quick tattoo upon the carpet. But the man went on, half-pleading, half-defiant, as he stood erect before her:

"Listen to me, Augustine! I know my utter unworthiness of you! I have faults, many and grave. I have been held at the forge of society, that tests the temper; but I have come out true as steel—to *you*! Oh! I almost dread the answer I have plead for. No! Do not speak yet!"

"*I must!*" Gus replied firmly, but with crimson cheeks and eyes averted. "This surprises me so!"

"But you have known me many months; you *must* have seen——"



"I have known you as a casual acquaintance," Gus answered, borrowing her mother's manner, "and *you* must have seen that your simplest attention was never encouraged."

"But you will give me hope that time——"

"I am awfully sorry to pain you," she interrupted firmly, "but I can not!"

"And you really refuse me?" There was mingled pain and menace in the man's voice.

"I repeat that I have never encouraged you to expect anything else!" the girl replied with dignity.

"And you *will not* hear me?" His brow grew darker and he strode rapidly across the floor.

"It would not be honest," she said simply. "*I can not!*"

He turned and seized her hand. Again she withdrew it; but he hurried on passionately:

"Augustine! I *will* speak! I must tell you how I love you! I have been a worldling; a hard, bitter man; yes! even a wicked one! I am no changeful boy! For twenty years my heart has slept—only the sound of your voice—the thrill of your touch—has waked it! I love you as only strong natures can love!"

"Stop, sir! I insist!" Gus spoke angrily now.

He stood still before her. Again that hard smile curved his lips over the white teeth, in a sort of snarl; and his voice was hard and cruel as he cried:

"Oh! girl, beware how you turn the wild love of a man like me into still wilder hate!"

"Mr. de la Plata!" Gus rose as she spoke. "You forget yourself!"

"By the God above us!" he answered hoarsely, "I will not forget you; will not let you forget me! You *shall* listen! I will not leave you until——"



"Pardon me! I think you will," she answered in Mrs. Browne's best form; and moving to the door swiftly, she called: "Mamma! Will you come?"

"They are all up stairs, Gus," Juny called out from the library, supposing the guest had gone. And, as she spoke, she passed into the hall, just as the man, with a muttered oath, rushed to the table for his hat. A glance at Juny's face held him rooted to the floor; a dazed memory seeming to struggle for life in his eyes.

Equally strange was the expression in the girl's. Doubt, amazement and something akin to terror, flashed through the gaze she kept fastened on his face.

The man was the first to recover himself. With a half shrug, he turned, roughly opened the door and passed out, muttering:

"Impossible! I'm an ass!"

Only after the door slammed behind him, Juny drew a long, deep breath.

"He, too? and in this house?" she said, aloud. "Pshaw! It can not be possible!"

Gus stood in the drawing-room door, staring at the other girl. The strange result of her prompt measures with her distasteful admirer had surprised her, equally as it had seemed to surprise the other two.

"What in the world do you mean?" she now asked, advancing to Juny. "What is it that can not be possible?"

"Oh! I was only thinking!" Juny answered, quickly recovering presence of mind. "So *that* is Colonel de la Plata?"

"Yes; that is mamma's latest Monte Cristo," Gus replied. "But she'll scarcely see him again soon. Did *you* think you had seen him before?"

"I can not say certainly," Juny said thoughtfully. "But it is a wonderful likeness to a man I knew years ago."



"And that one was a bad man?" Gus asked eagerly.

"The worst of men!" the other girl answered gravely.

"Oh! How awfully crimp that would be!" Gus cried.  
"So romantic!"

"Look here, Gus," Juny answered bluntly, but passing her arm about the other's slim waist, "I have never been in what Aunt Browne calls 'society,' so, perhaps, my eyes may be sharper than people's who have dust thrown in theirs all the time. I think I recognized the man. If so, he is only a common gambler."

"A common gambler!" echoed Gus, recoiling in dismay.  
"Oh! How *horribly* vulgar! But you heard me order him out? Yet we all thought—we believed——"

"Never believe what you hear, my dear," Juny answered brightly—"unless it be disagreeable. But there is no use moping over it. If he be not the gambler I am sure he is, he certainly must have some of his traits, with that identical face. And besides, his manner, even more than the face, carries me back to the very crisis of my life."

"Tell me about it!" Gus exclaimed.

Juny hesitated a moment before she replied:

"Not now, Gus. It is a long story, and I do not feel that I *can* tell it—now. Anyway, this Colonel de la Plata, as Will says, 'won't do to tie to.' Don't you think so?"

"I certainly do!" the society girl answered. Then she literally beamed as she added: "He's not one bit like M. A. Not nearly so crimp!"

"Not *nearly*," Juny echoed simply; whereupon she found herself seized in the sudden embrace of shapely arms, with showers of kisses—let us hope not vicarious—falling upon her face.

Then, breathless, Miss Browne rushed up the stairs, flinging down behind her the benison: "Oh! you dear—sweet—wise—*crimp* darling!"



## CHAPTER XII.

## ON THE TRAIL.

On leaving the lunch-room, Wilmot Browne lounged into the garden with his cigar ; and, taking the detective's papers from his pocket, reread them carefully.

" I can't make much of it," he said presently, tossing away his half-smoked Havana and striding about the walks. " The clue is so slight ! After all, it may mean nothing, for what hold *could* these adventurers have on uncle ? Pshaw ! I really believe I'm on a wild-goose chase, and I'll drop it, unless Beagle — And he, too ! " he interrupted himself. " He's a trifle too sharp and too machine-like to suit an old Indian fighter. Why, they might finish their deviltry and get off before he got half his red-tape unrolled ! "

He moved moodily about the garden, silent for some time, but continuing the same thought. For he spoke aloud at last :

" Yes ; there must be something in the papers, else the black gambler would never be so keen to get them, nor the rusty one so loth to let go. Maybe a tramp will clear the cobwebs out of my brains ! "

Opening the postern gate in the high brick wall, the young officer strode rapidly through the not crowded streets of the fashionable quarter. Thence, he turned into Second avenue and down toward St. Mark's Place, stopping, at last, before a small but tidy house and pulling the bell briskly. The door swung open, seemingly of itself, and the dim light of the hallway demanded a second glance to descry a tall, gaunt old woman there. The hard, flinty face, showing around the half-opened door, might have been cut from yellow ochre.



"Well?" she said briefly.

"Is Captain Beagle at home?" Browne asked.

"Who?" repeated the woman, still monosyllabic.

"Captain Hunter Beagle," he answered. "It's all right. I employ him."

"His office is——"

"Yes, I know; the Broadway agency. But I want to see him privately."

"He's out," the woman said.

"When will he be in?" Browne asked.

"Can't say. Leave a message?"

"By Jove! You ought to be a soldier," Will said, grimly.

"Yes, I'll leave a line, unless you think——"

"I don't think," the woman interrupted, "I know. Movements uncertain. Want a pad?"

"No; this will do." Captain Browne took out a card and penciled on it: "*Called to say employ extra help. Lose sight of neither man. See me to-morrow morning, anyway.*"

The woman took the card and, much to the writer's surprise, read it deliberately.

"Now, I know," he said shortly, "you're Beagle's partner."

"No; mother," the yellow ochre Sphinx answered unperturbed. Turning the card over, she read the name and added: "Oh! *You're* all right. He was writing to you. Come in."

As he obeyed, Beagle *mère* closed the front door carefully and opened that of the front room—half parlor, half office—where the detective worked up his private cases. On his desk, amid piles of red-taped papers, lay an envelope, addressed to Browne, the ink scarce dry.

"*Um!* He hasn't been out long!" the soldier remarked, examining the superscription.



A grim smile showed the woman's large, yellow teeth an instant. Then she relapsed into yellow ochre again as she said:

"You ought to be in the business. You twig close. No; he's not gone long. On a shadow, I guess."

The note was brief—"I have their meeting place for to-morrow. Will notify you in time. B."

"Anything more?" the maternal detective asked.

"Give me that card," Will answered; and he added: "Keep place closely shadowed. Come early to-morrow."

Then, leaving the house, he strolled moodily homeward. Reaching the corner below his mother's house, the soldier saw a man run hastily down the steps and enter a brougham standing at the door. As he and the vehicle approached each other, Browne said to himself:

"Another of Gus' evolutionists! They *are* a rum lot. Great God! Can it be?" And he stared at the man, who—busied in his own thought—never cast a glance at him from beneath his knotted, black brow.

Prompt to act ever, Will Browne strode rapidly after the carriage, several times almost losing it, before it pulled up at the door of a very fashionable club. Its occupant alighted and entered, his pursuer passing the house slowly to assure himself of the place.

"I'm sold, I guess," he said to himself. "The Coyote would scarcely be a member of 'The Orphic!' However, it is easy to ascertain."

He mounted the steps, the door swinging wide as the polished hallman bowed low.

"Is Major Van Borst in the club?" Browne asked, naming a retired officer whom he knew was an old member.

"No, sir," the man answered. "The major has gone to Governor's Island for the day."

"Indeed! Then that was not he who just entered?"



"Oh, no, sir! That is Colonel de la Plata, a visiting member."

Browne hesitated. The thing was too absurd; the Shiners' Gap sharp a swell clubman! But, somehow, the grim jest of Captain Beagle's yellow-ochre mother flashed into his mind—"You ought to be in the business; you twig close!"—and again he turned to the hallman:

"Can I leave a note for Major Van Borst?"

"Certainly, sir!" And a moment later Browne was in the reception room of the Orphic, its monogrammed Irish linen before him on the desk. But he noted little of the over-lavish decoration of the club; for, in a room just opposite—his back turned and his attention on the waiter, bringing the cut-glass "tot" of brandy on a silver salver—was the man he sought. Hastily swallowing it, Colonel de la Plata loudly ordered another.

Half ashamed of himself for playing spy, Browne scribbled a few words to his friend, announcing his return, then rose, undecided whether to go or to play out the role he had assumed. He examined the splendid engravings on the walls, the objects of *vertu* and the design of the Ottoman portieres.

Suddenly he stopped, staring into a mirror before him. In it was reflected the picture his man cast into one in the room opposite. The second tot of brandy replaced by a third, Colonel de la Plata had thrown himself back in his chair, with moody brow and fixed eyes, lost in deep thought. Nor was it pleasant thought, judged from the expression of his face; and, as Browne stared at that black brow and devilish expression, the night in the Shiners' Gap came up clear before him!

"Strange he should be here!" he muttered. "But very strange things happen in New York; and Beagle said I'd be surprised. That *may* not be the Coyote; but if not, then Kyle Hardy has a twin brother!"



Moving from the mirror, lest his reflection might be thrown into the one opposite, Will touched the gong and said to the servant who answered :

“Order me a closed cab from the nearest station at once, and put this in the rack for Major Van Borst.”

Soon after, he hastily raised a newspaper before his face. Colonel de la Plata had pushed back his chair and risen with an oath.

“Damn that vile brandy !” he roared at the waiter. “I believe your steward waters the stuff! Give me a card—quick !”

“Oho ! A visitor swearing at club servants and club liquors !” thought Browne. “Pretty bad form, that ! He certainly is not a gentleman ; the more chance he may be the Coyote !”

The other man strode down the hall, through the door held open by the obsequious servant, and entered his brougham, with a word to the driver. And with the detective instinct strong upon him now, Will Browne followed.

Just at that moment his cab drove up.

“Follow that brougham,” he said to the driver. “Do not lose it ; but keep a little out of sight. Here !”

The man's eyes sparkled at the gold coin dropped into his hand ; and it lifted to his hat—unusual concession for a cabman—as he clambered to his seat and replied :

“K'rect, Kern'l ! I won't lose him !”

Both vehicles rattled over the cobbles, round corners and through cross-streets ; until, passing round Tompkins Square, the brougham pulled up. Will saw his man descend and stroll across the dingy breathing place of the human hive, swarming about that delectable locality.

He followed slowly, the square being almost empty at that hour. No one minds anybody else's business in the busy city. An occasional shop-girl glanced up admiringly at the



unusual advent of two strangers, well dressed and stylish, sauntering across Tompkins Square in broad daylight ; and the *gamins* stopped their games to "twig the swells." But at last, the foremost man hastened his pace ; turned a sharp corner and shot across the narrow street, under the three balls that decorated the dingy sign, "Isaac Schonstein, Broker."

"I am on the right trail," Will said to himself. "Foreign colonels do not frequent low pawn shops in the daytime. It must be something urgent, too, that brings Kyle Hardy here so openly."

He jotted down the name and number of the shop ; recrossed the square and entered his cab.

"Drive around slowly," he said, "until that brougham starts again ; but mind ! Don't you lose it !"

"You bet ! Kern'l !" responded cabby ; and ere long the two vehicles were again rolling westward, the brougham in the lead, until they turned into St. Mark's Place.

Suddenly Will's cab almost pulled up ; then passed slowly down the block and he saw the chase at a stand, before a plain house. Its occupant got out, ran up the steps and opened the door with a pass-key.

"Stand here till I come !" Will said to the cabman, as he jumped out around the corner and moved rapidly back into St. Mark's Place. The empty brougham was just moving off, and he slowly passed the house twice, noting the number and the fact that the lower blinds were closed.

"Well ! If this be the fly, he is deucedly near the spider's web !" he exclaimed, as he glanced across the street. For, on the same block, a few doors below on the opposite side, he had recently interviewed Captain Beagle's mother.

"Wonder if *he's* back yet ?" he muttered. "Of course he knows this ; but damn his red tape ! I'd better do a little work on my own account."



He halted irresolute, his foot upon the step, his hand on the iron baluster. He was half-minded to ring, make some query of the servant and find whose house it was. But, as he hesitated, a boy moved up the block, staring at the numbers, indistinct and sometimes missing on the changed transoms.

"Sa-ay, guv'ner! Is this th' right address?" cried Master Laurence Miggs; "Guess Hi've jest 'bout hit it!" And he extended a note to Browne, address up.

"I really can't——" the latter began, interrupting himself hastily, as he reached for the note and added: "Yes; that address is all right!"

"Cert? No mistake?" Larry queried, not relinquishing his hold on the missive; "'Cos the old 'un said how Hi wus ter be dead sure! Are you the right 'un, an' no mistake?"

"Look for yourself," Will replied calmly, pointing to the number on the house; and he drew from the tragedian's doubting fingers the screed Tip Miles had directed to "*Colonel M. de la Plata, No. —, St. Mark's Place.*"

"And here's something for your trouble," Will added in great glee. "Where is the old 'un now?"

"Give it up! Ask me a'nuther!" responded the Mercury. "He leff me short kind o', an' tole me he'd hunt me up wen needed."

"You seem a bright boy," Will answered. "Where did you tell the old 'un he could find you?"

"Were *should* I? At ther Gran' Opery House, cert!" the boy responded proudly. "You know? Tompkins Square, down celler—nex 'ter Scheffelein's *bierhaus*!"

"Tompkins Square! Oh! yes—I know," Will answered. "Well, I may need you, and I pay well."

"Yer kin licquerdate!" Larry cried; then throwing himself into an attitude, spouted:



“‘An’ frum the hower yer gasped at packing, boy—  
Think that ther stars rains fortunes on yer!  
Ther ain’t no sich as fails!’

“Well, guv’ner, yer has m’ haddress; an’ mer name’s Laurence Irving Forrest Macready Barrett Miggs! But h’it’ll jest save time t’ask fur Larry. Howsomdever, I’m ’bleeged for this, Curn’//!”

And, with a flourish of the crownless hat, the boy ran off, tossing and catching the half-dollar Will had given him. The latter lost no time. Clutching the note tight, he crossed the street and pulled the Beagle bell vigorously once more. The yellow-ochre mother reappeared; and, without surprise, simply said:

“Again?”

“Back yet?” Will asked, with equal brevity.

“Been back; gone,” was the response.

“Any water boiling?”

Genuine surprise crept into Mrs. Beagle’s face for an instant, only to creep out again; but she wasted no words and nodded briefly.

“Get me some, *quick*! This is business!” Browne said shortly.

The singular matron, captured by mood and manner, closed the door, opened the office and ushered him in. Then, disappearing a moment, she returned with a bowl of steaming water. Without a word she set it on the desk; without a word he held the sealed flap of the envelope over the hot vapor, passing it back and forth. Then he chose a thin, clean paper-knife and raised the flap like an expert. Meanwhile, the yellow ochrous hostess stood calmly by; an admiration vaguely showing in her eyes, which now found vent in the words:

“Pretty neat! Ever been — *in*?”



Eager and intent as he was, the *naiveté* of the question moved Browne's lips. As he carefully slipped the note from the envelope, he answered :

"You understand what I'm doing?"

"Perfectly ; State's prison !" Mrs. Beagle rejoined.

As he read the brief note, Will Browne grew hot and cold. Then he reread it, exclaiming :

"By Jove ! *What* luck ! A close shave, though !"

For Mr. Tip Miles' note, not dated or signed, ran thus :

"*To-morrow too late. To-night instead. Three ball Isaac: nine o'clock sharp.*" This Browne rapidly copied ; adding a line to urge the detective to promptness and giving the pawnbroker's address, in case the tryst had been changed :

"*We had best go down separately. I will patrol north side of square from 8:40,*" he added in a P. S. "*If you are sharp, we're sure of them now !*"

Then he turned to Mrs. Beagle, after her own way :

"Mucilage?"

For answer, that remarkable female took the envelope from the table and held it to the light. Then, wiping the paper-knife upon her apron, she carefully removed all the damp gum from its flap ; pressing it between two clean blotters. Next she opened a small book-case, as she remarked lucidly :

"Government adhesive !"

Choosing one of several bottles, she deftly gummed the flap, replaced the envelope between the two blotters, and placing the whole upon a wooden chair, sat serenely upon it. As she did so, the yellow ochre dame gave a short nod of approval.

"You'll do !" she said. "Better leave th' army and join the profession. There !" She reached beneath her and extended the letter, compact and smooth as when first sealed.



"Give my note the instant he comes," Will said. "Thank you, very much!"

"What for? It's business!" And the mother of the detective Gracchus closed the door upon Will, who went at speed for his cabman.

"Here; deliver this, quick!" he said. "No answer; I'll look out for the horse!"

Fifteen minutes later Will Browne was in his own apartment, dressing for dinner. He looked at his watch. "Six o'clock," he said. "If it turn out all right to-night, then the last three hours have been better spent than any previous six of my life!"

Shortly after, looking very much at home in evening dress—which not all gentlemen of fashion can truthfully be said to do—the handsome young cavalryman crossed the spacious hall and tapped at a door.

"May I come in? It is Will," he said.

The door opened and he almost started back in his pleased surprise. For the girl before him, in her full evening dress, was almost beautiful; the absolute clearness of her skin and brightness of happy eyes lighting up the irregular, but piquant, face, crowned with shining masses of her warm-tinted hair.

The bare arms and perfect neck and bust gleamed out spotless and innocent of a single trinket from the quite *decolletée* dress, and its gracefully clinging drapery swept in caressing folds about the curves of the tall, lissome figure.

"By Jove! Juny, you *are* superb!" Will exclaimed in genuine admiration. "I've seen most of the city belles on undress parade, but you'd hold your own in the very front rank!"

Again his eye traveled over the attractive picture, a soft flush stealing into the girl's cheek, warming it to richer tone. Impulsively he took her hand, leading her before the tall hall mirror.



"Come here! How are we for a contrast, Juny?"

Naturally enough the girl moved on, standing by his side before the glass; but, as she gazed into it, suddenly a burning rush of crimson flooded her cheeks, surging over neck, bust and arms. She withdrew her hand, stepping back from the mirror; but her eyes were steadily fixed on the ground—though the flush died slowly out of the pearly skin—as she said quietly:

"But, seriously, Will, I am so glad you came. I was crazy to tell you — No; to warn you that — I mean to ask you if it is positively certain that both those men are now in New York?"

"I was almost certain, Juny, before I went out to-day. Now, I know they are both here; and I have seen the Coyote."

"And you know that he—that he is —"

"That he is in our hands, little girl! By this time to-morrow, God willing, we will have them both! And then —" He did not finish, but the darkening face and strong gesture boded little good to the ugly enemy. But after a moment's pause, he added more quietly:

"I am pretty well up in hunting Indians, Juny; but these pale-face devils beat the redskins by a distance! But I'm on a sure trail; and to-morrow will tell!"

"Remember, Will; you promised I should help!" the girl cried, her slight figure drawn up to its full height and the rich face full of emotion. "*Please* let me! Ah! Will, if I could only do *something* for dad! Something to prove how I love him!"

"Plenty of time for that, dear little girl," the man answered softly. "None of us need proof of *that*. And," he added with softened voice and an eloquent look, "it is rarely needed to tell how one *loves!*"

Again their eyes met; again the flood of color surged over brow, neck and bosom. But, just then, Mrs. Browne's door



opened, and the odor of her favorite heliotrope floated into the hall, followed by its mistress, radiant in garnet silk and diamonds. Will had only time to whisper—"I must be out this evening. I will slip away from the smoking-room. If any message comes for me, watch and keep it away from mamma and the rest. If I am missed, say I told you I was going"—he hesitated, then smiled as he added—"to the Grand Opera House!"

The stately dinner was, if possible, less cheerful than the lunch had been. Mrs. Browne was plainly preoccupied; Augustine looked bored, and every now and then her eye sought Juny's with a meaning glance; Will, wrapped in thought, ate mechanically; and Juny felt the failure of her effort to be bright and cheerful, in response to Colonel Baylor's loving talk.

But all dinners end at last. Mrs. Browne rose and the girls followed her signal. Just as Will crossed to hold the door open for them, he said: "By the way, mamma, you said that Gus received a Colonel de la Plata?"

"I did, Wilmot, my son," Mrs. Browne replied serenely. "An elegant gentleman, of old family and great wealth. A *very* different person from this Mr. Lake!"

"*Very* different!" Gus added quickly. "He's not one bit crimp! Not even good form!"

"Augustine!" reproved the mother. "Wilmot, you shall see for yourself, the very next time he calls."

"Yes; the very next time!" Gus repeated, stealing a meaning look at Juny.

Will caught the look. He stared a moment at both girls before he answered quietly:

"But, mamma, are you sure he'll call again?"

Mrs. Browne halted, seeming ready to draw up in line of battle. But she changed her mind and led her forces off the field, to entrench in the drawing-room.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## LANDLORD AND TENANT.

When Captain Wilmot Browne, as amateur detective, examined Captain Hunter Beagle's note and pronounced him not far off, he builded wiser than he knew.

Not two minutes before he read that superscription, the detective had peered through closed blinds and seen Kyle Hardy drive off in his brougham. Hastily dashing off the address, he had crossed the street and pulled the bell of that worthy's residence.

The door opened in somewhat suspicious fashion. Through the narrow crack peered the wizened, sharp-beaked face of an old quadroon woman. But the parchment wrinkled still more, in recognition; and a toothless smile parted the shriveled lips as she said, with strongly marked accent:

"Ah! Eet ees you? *Bo'jo', m'sieu! Malheur* of me! But *m'sieu le conolle*, he just to drive himself away. *Tiens, madame* will geefe to 'eerself ze plaisir of to receif yo' *visite*, ees eet not?"

She opened the door wider, but closed it jealously after admitting him; and opened the door of a neat parlor.

"*Tiens, maman, qui va la bas?*" called a soft, liquid voice, over the balusters, from above. The French had the strong Creole *burr*, as she continued: "*Si'l est m'sieu mo comeare*——"

"*Ga' tu, p'tite Lili!*" quickly interrupted the old quadroon; then, changing to English, she added: "'Ere com' Mista' Jonson, 'oo hown 'ouse; weel mek leetle *visite*."



"I will see him with much pleasure!" called down the voice, with strong accent but excellent English; and, quick following it, the tall, lissome figure of a young woman tripped lightly down the stairs. She extended her hand to Beagle with pleased greeting:

"Entrez, monsieur. I am certainly charm to see you, I assure you truly. You see it is so *triste* here; we know so few. Monsieur, my husband, is out *en ville*. He is at the Wall street; he will be *desolé* not having the pleasure of to see you, Monsieur Jonson!"

Graciously and with pretty dignity, the girl—for she was scarcely more—motioned Beagle to a seat, before taking one herself. Tall above usual height, her figure was the perfection of Southern symmetry; lithe, but perfectly developed and tending to the sensuous, in its full, soft curves. If any fault, it was, perhaps, a waist a trifle small for the full bust and swelling contours below it; but the hands and feet, small, taper and perfectly moulded, could not have been improved by the sculptor's art.

The face was as unmistakably Creole as the figure. The pale olive skin, clear and transparent as that of a blonde, showed the blue-veined tracery beneath; and the long, dark eyes, fringed with long, curved lashes, seemed black in a steady regard. Full lipped redness parted over regular little teeth, and the soft oval of the face—rather long for its facial angle—toned the effect of a nose decidedly aquiline.

So, even without hearing the liquid indolence of voice, a glance would have showed Lili Duvrai a native of Louisiana.

But only the acute physiologist—who had closely examined the roots of the filbert nails, and the iris of the long eyes—might have suspected that the bright blood, glowing in the peachy cheeks, was not untainted; that the worst legacy of the slave system had set its heritage in the veins of the stately woman there!



For the high lineage, elegance and culture of Philippe Duvrai had not protected him from the curse of custom, con-  
doned into unwritten law—custom that survived its exem-  
plars at the far South, sometime after the besom of war had  
swept away slavery. It had also swept away Duvrai's  
wealth and left him a wounded cripple, and all the fair future  
the young Octoroon mother had dreamed for her baby girl  
was set at naught by the irony of fate. When the father  
died—the last of his old race—but a small annuity was left  
for his child, and the promised Paris education was, per-  
force, abandoned for the simpler learning which she rapidly  
acquired.

Lili was but a girl of fifteen—though a woman in the  
fullest development of that fostering climate—when Captain  
Kyle Hardy took rooms at her mother's house in New  
Orleans. Impressionable, ignorant of the world's ways, and  
with the hot blood of both races, unrestrained by precept or  
example, Lili soon became the gambler's very slave. For  
years she had adored him as few women, with better oppor-  
tunities for dangerous knowledge, adore legitimate husbands.  
When the chances of his reckless life went against him, at  
New Orleans, she followed him to San Francisco, thence to  
Havana and to Rio de Janeiro, whence they had come to  
New York.

And where they went, the devoted old mother followed,  
too; doing almost menial service and making herself almost  
indispensable to Hardy's comfort, as the girl had become  
to his happiness. For the latter's gentle devotion and win-  
ning nature had clung around the perverted heart of the  
adventurer, saving him from utter induration in vice and  
leaving a something human in him still.

Yet, in all those six years, for she was now twenty-one,  
the meek humility in her one drop of base blood had domi-  
nated the proud Creole strain in Lili's veins. She had been



satisfied to serve as hand-maiden the man she loved, dreaming of no higher place now and, like all her race, not looking to the future.

For, recklessness of consequences—equally with “suffrage is the badge of all their tribe ;” and this poor girl had been content—until just now—to serve her lord, even as Abra served the wisest of Israel’s kings !

But, of late, a cloud had risen over the horizon of Lili’s little world ; and, for the first time, her dream of secure possession was roughly broken by dread of a rival.

Some of this dread had grown from her lover’s changed manner, his lengthened absences and his rough resentment when questioned. But more of it was confirmed by the strange sympathy and seemingly chance words of the detective, in his assumed character of Mr. Vanderpool Johnstone, agent of the Goelet heirs, in which he became known to Kyle Hardy and his mistress.

When Beagle first began his shadow, in the interest of Wilmot Browne, Hardy was occupying a gorgeous flat and spending money like a nabob. But very soon he “struck a streak of nigger luck.” Cards and speculation took a downhill run on him together, and he advertised for a small house in a quiet neighborhood. Beagle, knowing the St. Mark’s Place house to be vacant, offered it to Hardy in his *role* of agent at so low a price as to insure acceptance. Then he rushed to the real agent and paid double that amount to secure his doubly valuable neighbor.

There is no solitude like that of a vast city. Nowhere can one hide so securely as in a great crowd. Shrewd as he was generally, Kyle Hardy never dreamed that “the finicking house-rat,” as he called Beagle to his women, was anything else ; and neither he nor Lili had ever seen him enter or leave his own house.



Calling at first on business, Mr. Johnstone had gradually become a social visitor; but one who chanced to come when Hardy was absent, generally. And in her late loneliness and trouble those visits had grown welcome to the pretty Octoroon, especially as "Monsieur Jonson" seemed to know gossip of that great world into which Hardy went so freely and—of course, alone.

It was Beagle who had skillfully fanned the flame of Lili's jealousy; unknowing the nature through which it might rage a consuming conflagration. He had dropped vague hints of Gus and the Lexington-avenue visits; but he had received usurious return in details of Hardy's later career, innocently related by the girl.

For, though he did not understand society, Hunter Beagle seemingly understood women; and he realized that the hot-blooded Octoroon's wrath might let out many a secret denied even to tenderest sympathy. And his cunningly-put hints of Colonel de la Plata's social success—often truly remarkable, even central in the gullible snobbery of New York—would bring the blood to her cheek and the hot talk to her tongue.

"So, he looks high, this husband of mine!" she would exclaim. "*Mon dieu!* There were days in 'Freesco and in Rio when he was not so *exigeant*—when he was content with Lili! '*A bas le sentiment!*' Why is it that woman may not tire of her love? All men do!"

Then Beagle would intimate—so delicately as not to shock her—that *the* man, worthy of her love, would never tire; that there was love so deep and lasting as to be a revelation to her. And the girl, not comprehending, listened. But she never suspected that her visitor knew Hardy's real history or his *alias*. She played Madame de la Plata, in sublime ignorance that her race and her shame were both known to Beagle.



On his part, the shrewd detective had long since pumped dry the girl's really shallow sources of information ; for, she only knew that Hardy was a glittering adventurer ; and his career previous to meeting her, and his present connection with Tip Miles, Beagle had found were alike a sealed book to her.

Still, he continued his visits, timing them in Hardy's absence ; but he would surely have kicked himself ere he confessed to any *personal* interest in her. What ! Captain Hunter Beagle, the blooming rose of the detective bouquet, interested in a woman ! And that woman one of impure blood and of not pure life ! Perish the absurdity ! But, unconfessed, the man of hand-cuffs was himself captured, and the net he spread for Hardy was doubly meshed, with business and with—jealousy !

And to the many visits, the present one proved stormy exception.

For soon, Lili rose and paced the small parlor nervously ; reminding her visitor of a sleek she panther, by her sinuous, agile glide and the gleam her dark eyes, ever and again, shot into his.

“ And so, my husband visits much among the *hauts riches* of this city, you tell me ! ” she cried, stopping before him, lacing and unlacing her slim fingers.

“ And why not ? ” he answered slowly ; watching keenly the effect of his words. “ The colonel is a handsome man and an elegant ; a great favorite with our belles. I have always seen him in the swellest boxes at the opera ; and no assembly on Murray Hill is complete without him ! Naturally, the quiet you prefer, in your life at home —— ”

“ Indeed, then ! ” she broke in angrily. “ Is it that the husband must leave the quiet, happy home, where the wife can not suffice to him for all ? Is it so that the *société* of New York teaches itself ? ”



"I fear it is so," Beagle answered slowly. "Of course, many doors open to *him*, through which he could not carry *you* —— *Mademoiselle*?"

He dropped the last word out, slowly and after a brief pause, emphasizing it by no vocal stress.

The girl stopped her restless walk; standing staring an instant, ere she gasped:

"*Mon dieu!* —— you —— *know?*"

"Yes; I know," he answered earnestly. "Admiration, devotion sharpen our comprehension, Lili! *I* have grown too deeply interested in you not to learn that he is now abusing blessings as undeserved as they are ——"

She faced him, with flashing eyes:

"Stop! You shall add not one word! What he is to me — what am I to him — these things we have made for ourselves! If the priest has not spoken the words of marriage, then have our two hearts spoken them! In the sight of God, we are man and wife!"

"Pardon me!" he began. "But in this section the law——"

"What have we with your law?" she broke in. "*A bas* your law here! With us, in my home, the law of the heart is sometimes taken as the law of God! Why does my husband—— *he* not deserve, as you say?"

"Because, having the power to betray your trust, he uses it!" the man answered. "Because, fearing no law to punish, he——*deceives you!*"

She stared at him a moment, silent. Then she dropped into a seat, her face in her hands. So, while the little mantel clock ticked out one full minute. Then she raised to him a face blanched and drawn, the lips bloodless, the eyes haggard. Suddenly, as he watched her, Hunter Beagle was struck with the evolution by pain of the hidden likeness of the beautiful youth to the puckered features of the old quadroon mother.



When she spoke, it was in a dull, hard voice:

"Had other man than you, Monsieur Jonson, spoken thus of him, I had order him from my door. But you long have been kind, gentle to me. Of all this great, bad city, it is but you whom I may call my friend! I am sure of it, that your good heart would not permit you to torture mine like this, except for you *know* what you speak! In all these six years I have been to him as wife, he to me as husband! There was great reason"—she paused and turned away an instant—"Pardon me that of *this* I may not speak! But it was *good* reason wherefore we did not marry! But always I have trust *him* so as have I trust the good God! Now, what you say cuts to my heart, because—because my heart tell me long time it is not impossible so! But against you, Monsieur Jonson—yes, against my own heart—I must have *proof*!"

"You *shall* have it!" Beagle exclaimed, more naturally than he had spoken for years. "Lili, you shall have proof to-morrow!"

"*A demain!*" she answered with a wan smile that did not conceal the pain behind it. "To-morrow I shall expect you and—*with proof*!"

"And if I bring it," the man said eagerly, "you will reward my friendship by letting me protect you from further wrong?"

The strange smile deepened on the girl's face, but the voice was only weary, not broken, in which she said:

"I shall not need. With that proof in my heart I can protect myself!"

The tough detective stood irresolute—abashed for the first time in his life, before the girl whose history he knew so well.

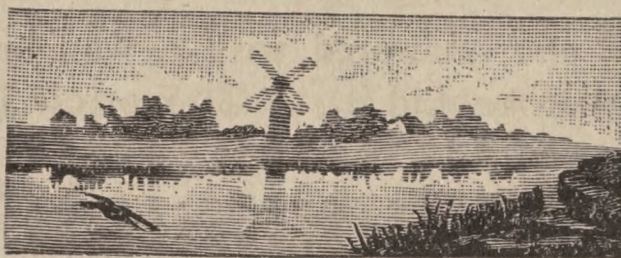
Wearily, but very gently, she swept him a deep curtsy, as she said:



“I will now ask for your permission. I am not composed. I am ill by what you say. To-morrow you will bring me proof, and I will then—I will—*trust you!* *Au revoir, Monsieur Jonson!*”

Without one word Beagle passed from the house, crossed the street and entered his own.

But a strange, new feeling was stirring about his heart.





## CHAPTER XIV.

## SOME DOMESTIC MATTERS.

As Wilmot Browne saw Kyle Hardy put the pass-key in his lock, that householder had remarked to himself:

“Well, damn this nigger luck! It never turns!”

Nor was this profane apostrophe to the blind goddess wholly without foundation. The gambler's lines had not fallen in pleasant places of late, either at the card-table or at the tenderer game he was so intent upon. And now, his emphatic snub at the hands of the girl he had believed certain prey to his killing manner and plausible lies, was literally “a facer.”

At the Orphic, he had braced his nerves on much brandy and, finding no note from Miles at the pawnbroker's, had returned home in the worst of humors.

In the hall, the quadroon woman answered his query for Lili shortly, that she was ill with a bad headache and would not be disturbed. To his next remark, about dinner, she answered even more shortly:

“And weeth vot sall I buy 'eem? You leefe no money to zee 'ouse. 'Ow will ze markeet geefe ze meet—ze *pain* ze butchaire, eh? *Mo ga tou moon!* I shame more to ask ze truss? *V'la!* Eez but tea an' *le pain* een zees 'ouse!”

“Tea and bread be damned!” Mr. Hardy replied, as illogical as he was discourteous. “Do you take me for a cursed old woman?”

The old quadroon's eyes gleamed as she answered:

“*Non!* Sairtainlee! But one time me, I hav' take you for one *man!* Present, 'ow I take you, eh?”



"What the devil do you mean?" he growled. "I can't give you money when I haven't any, can I?"

"Non; I 'ave not ask 'im!" she answered. "*Mais*, eef eez no meat, one sall eat not—no? You much can leefee een ze cloobe. Me; I not can eat zere!"

"Look here, Mother Duvrai," the man answered roughly, "there's no use mincing matters. I am damned tired of this growling; and you women will have to give up style and live cheap, till luck turns!"

"Cheepe, eh? Ve sall leefee vidout de style? *Bon dieu!* It is ease to do zat! *Mais*, dere are someting my chile can do *not* vidout! She have been more as vife to you, so long time!" the woman answered, doggedly. "She been to you slave—ze soul so as ze body! *She* sall have ——"

"Stow your preaching!" Hardy growled back. "I'm in no humor for nonsense!"

"So! Neither *me*, I am not!" the quadroon answered. "But you do know, is it not? zat you can keel my chile by neglect her! So! Evere sence ve coome to New Yok—*cré nom!* I belief zat you wish to do!"

Hardy looked at the woman with evil glare in his eyes; his voice growing louder and more brutal as he said:

"Curse your ugly tongue! Ever since I let you tag round the world after me, you've tried to boss me! You shall learn your place, once for all! Next time you lecture me, I'll kick you into the street, neck and crop! I'll have no more insolence from a damned old nigger!"

As he had spoken, the face of the old quadroon changed more swiftly and more strongly than his own. Outraged pride burned in the sunken eyes; and the thin lips writhed into a smile that Doré might have given one of the souls in his Frozen Hell. Herself the daughter of a Creole of ancient name, and a score of years the companion of the most noted man of his day, Frozine de la Salle held her



lineage as proudly as though the church had blessed it. And, in all those years—until she had followed her daughter, in her old age—never had hint of insult been given her by man, deeming himself gentleman.

And now, as Hardy spoke rapid oaths, and even advanced with threatening hand raised in menace, the long, patient drudge transformed into the tigress.

Swiftly the withered hand slipped into her bosom, and the long, sharp blade of a poignard gleamed in the dim hallway. But, ere she could speak—even before the man could recoil—Lili's voice called to them from above.

“Kyle Hardy, stop!” she cried in clear, resonant tones, rapidly descending as she spoke. “For six years I have been your mistress; how true you know! All those years Maman has been your best friend—your very slave! in sickness and in health—rich or poor! Now, you *dare* insult her! Threaten *her*! My mother, whose blood is in my veins! *You* dare reproach her race! What *she* is, I am! When you have laid at my feet and begged my love! Every time you have lied, in swearing to prize me as your *wife*! Every caress in all these years—*mon dieu*!—all of them were given to—the *negro*! Yesterday, the shame to say this would have killed me! Now, my worst shame is, that I—*negro as I am*—could descend to be all that to *you*!”

The latent fire in her hot Creole blood glowed as she spoke; the clear voice vibrant with scorn, the lithe form drawn to full height; the blaze in her eyes dropping his before them. Ere she finished she had reached her mother—crouching there as the wildcat crouches, guarding her young—and, passing the long, graceful arm about her, Lili drew the withered face close to her heaving breast.

“Heed him not, *Maman chérie*!” she added, gently. “And put by that ugly knife. ’Tis needed not, for a coward, like this—*white man*!”



Kyle Hardy answered no word ; nor raised his eyes from the ground. Turning sullenly into the parlor, he slammed the door and slowly paced the floor ; the brutal gladiator light dying from his face, leaving it weak and childish in its irresolution. Natural violence of temper, inflamed by Orphic Club brandy, had combined, with brooding over his bad luck, to carry Hardy beyond all precedent brutality in his own home ; far beyond his own intent. Of late—since he began to believe that he really cared for Gus Browne, as well as for her money—he had been rather careless of Lili and sometimes fretful in his mood.

But such brutality as he had just shown her mother, he knew she never dreamed was hidden in his nature ; and no little shame was mingling with his wonder as to how he should carry it off with her. He had really loved the girl, as such men love, and the memory was not yet cold. But he was “in a streak of bad luck,” and, to the professional gambler, there is no ill—foreign or domestic—which touches that.

Absolutely out of money, with club debts, which left unpaid would ruin all chance for future fleecing of the Orphic, he had that day doubly discounted the proverb—biblical to his craft—“Lucky in love, unlucky at cards !”

But the woman he imagined had awakened something better than the mere animal, in what passed with him for a heart, had spurned him from her door. The woman he had used as a plaything all these years—child of an inferior race as she was—had just scourged him still more fiercely under his own roof !

“Damnation ! Am I never to win at anything ?” he muttered, striding about the floor. “Is that slut, Fortune, stocking the cards, that my short flushes can *never* fill ? But I may scoop *one* pot ; revenge on that cursed Baylor and his pretty nephew, before they get back from Europe ! When I



get those vouchers from Tip Miles, I'll hold the age on you, my haughty Augustine! But, damnation! I'll starve before I can win, if this nigger luck lasts! And these women! What am I to do with Lili? As for the old hell-cat, curse her! she may starve if my successor with the girl does not——"

He paused; and, with one of those sudden transitions the gambler's mind often undergoes—without any thought or reason, almost mechanically—Kyle Hardy opened Lili's pretty escritoire and wrote a few lines rapidly. Folding and sealing them, he cried, with a bitter laugh:

"Lucky at cards, unlucky in love! Damn! I *ought* to win, one way! Well, this may get me another interview; and then, if I lose, the fault is —— *mine*; not hers!"

He was still balancing the note in his hand, as he lounged back in the chair, when the door-gong sounded sharp through the still house. There were not many visitors; and Hardy, not moving, muttered: "Johnstone, I suppose! What a cursed flat that fellow is. By Jove! Maybe I might work Lili off on *him*, when I ——"

The door opened and Lili stood looking yearningly at him; a note in her hand.

"It was a note for you, Kyle ——"

He broke in hastily, jumping to his feet:

"Has the messenger gone? I want him to take this! It is very important!"

Without the least hesitancy, without one tremor of voice, the girl answered, taking the note:

"No; I told him to wait. Is there any answer to the one he brought?"

Hardy—as ignorant of any suspicion in her mind as of the messenger's flight—yielded the note he had written, as he tore open the one from Miles, so refreshed by Browne and Mrs. Beagle. He read it with eager eyes:



"No ; this is all right. But send the other !"

Still the woman lingered ; looking wistfully at him. Then she glided nearer, half-raising her hands to place them on his shoulder ; then restraining herself by a strong effort.

"Kyle !" She spoke very softly ; a half sob in the voice. "You *did* love me truly ? What you said to maman just now was but anger, was it not ?"

"Oh ! yes ; that's all right," he answered in a careless, absent way. "Go and send my note at once, that's a good girl. I'll tell the old lady about the row." Then, all forgetful of the yearning woman at his side, hoping against hope, longing against conviction—Kyle Hardy fastened his eyes upon Miles' note, devouring it as he muttered :

"To-night ! After six long years !"

The quick ear of the woman caught the words, and her eyes instinctively fell to the superscription of the note she held.

Then swiftly, noiselessly—unnoticed by the preoccupied man—Lili glided from the room ; flew up stairs and locked the door of her own chamber.

With fingers trembling so she scarce could tear it open, she dashed the envelope to the floor. With face blanching to a pallor ghastly and death-like, she read the words :

"AUGUSTINE !"

"If you trust man's faith—man's love, see me to-morrow. When I said you were the only woman I have loved in twenty years, it was God's truth ! Send one line to the club and make happy

"Your wretched, but devoted

"MANUEL."



## CHAPTER XV.

## AT TOMPKINS SQUARE.

That particular valve of the lungs of New York, known as Tompkins Square, was rather a strange than an attractive spot after nightfall at the date of this story. Electricity had not, as yet, been harnessed for the drudgery of corporations; and the gas jets, flickering in the night wind, made darkness quite visible beyond their immediate vicinage.

Throngs of men, women and children lounged in the not inviting square or filled the pavements around it, eagerly taking in the air—fresh by comparison with that of the reeking tenements, satirizing the name of home!

Not the lowest class of metropolitan poor, by many degrees, these were yet wanting enough in the comforts—even the necessities of civilization—and their rooms were eagerly exchanged for any atmosphere less fetid.

Under flare of smoking wide-awakes, numbers of the pettiest traders wrestled with their owners for the possession of hard-earned coppers, their sharp cries cutting through the murmurous talk of family groups, dulled by poverty and wearied by day's labor.

"Paynoot can-dee! Koh-kinoot can-dee! One cint a-piece!" was the most strident among the vendors' cries; but High Art rose supreme over trade as the voice of the Leading Man of the Grand Opera House swelled upon the air:

"Gran' comple-men-terree mat-e-nay, ter-morrer night! Benefit of Laurence Forrest Irving Barrett Macready Miggs, at the Gran' Opery House! Tick-ets, honly ten cents!" shouted the ubiquitous Larry, flapping his card-boards under



the most unpromising of noses. "Here's yer tick-ets! Secure yer seats or git left! Ten cents!"

But energy was not largely repaid, and Larry at length pulled up at the candy-stand.

"Say, Mother O'Shane, let's trade?" he suggested cheerily. "Ther combinashe 'll gie ye a reserve seat on a soap-box, ef ye'll set 'em up fur th' whole cump'ny. Sa-ay! Let's sample 'em, jest fur a flyer!" And the tragedian grabbed a piece of candy and executed a break-down while he munched it. Then he struck an attitude and cried: "'The funeral baker's meat did furnish a fourth of the marriag-ables!' Sa-ay! That hardware's boss! Better trade—eh?"

"Oi'll not thrade!" replied the dealer grimly. "An' yez 'll be afther payin' me fur thot can-dee!"

"Not thrade!" echoed Larry; and in a Barrettesque pose he spouted: "'Unsay them words, Lord Car-de-null! Ver kin embezzle, but I *do* love peanut candy! 'Love her? My Lord! As rivers love th' sunlight; bakin' in their beans an' hurryin' on!' Oh! I jest *kin* play *Reech-er-loo*, wid a song-an'-dance! Here's yer tick-ets! Las' pearrance of th' Tompkins Square Gran' Opery House Comberna-shun!"

And across the square rushed Larry, shouting *his* Art Evolution for protoplasmic results. There he met a comrade dolefully swinging his blacking-box. Larry seized and examined it eagerly.

"Hello, Pete! Any shekels?" he asked. "Wot! 'Nary red? 'To thy knees an' crawl fur pudden!' Sa-ay! This yere benefit's goin' ter be a reg'lar frost! Ver kin gamble, we'd better lay fur a shine, 'case any soft passes this way! Meanwile, I kin jest have a rehearsal of my song in *Reech-er-loo*. Ver kin copyrite, ef ther ain't ben nine conjunctions already on that 'ere song in th' Deestric' Court!"

Divesting himself of his jacket, the coming young tragedian sang, with much humor, this song:



I'm a youth of fair family, fortune and face,  
 With not *too* much brains to my share ;  
 I've enough cheek and money to keep up the pace,  
 But I *never* repeat what I hear !  
 I've had my flirtations with girls, now and then ;  
 With two married beauties, or so ;  
 And the things they all do—just to lead on the men—  
 Are—none of *my* business, ye' know !

There's a lovely grass widow, with eyes like a saint,  
 Whose rivals are all in despair !  
 They say she is built up of pads and of paint  
 And, at night, sheds her teeth and her hair !  
 And young Mrs. Brown, th' old drummer's young wife,  
 Has five, or six, solid old beaux ;  
 Each ready to give up his dollars, or life—  
 For a—it's none of *my* business, ye' know !

There's little Miss Timmins, whose papa went through  
 Bankruptcy proceedings this year ;  
 Her diamonds and phaeton are equaled by few ;  
 But *I* never repeat what I hear !  
 If sweet Mrs. B., who is six months a bride,  
 Sups nightly, *chez* Delmonico ;  
 After doing the park, in a *tete-a-tete* ride,  
 It's—none of *my* business, ye' know !

“Never min' th' *ancor*, Pete !” the singer broke in.  
 “Shoot the 'plause ; I'll g'long 'thout it :”

There's *one* old boy in town, with a nose jolly red,  
 Who don't own a tooth nor a hair ;  
 Who goes to the ballet, instead of to bed,  
 While the wife of his bosom snores *there* !  
*His* notes and his flowers astray must be sent—  
 Like his smiles from the very front row !  
 And no fellow knows how much cash he has spent  
 On—It's *none* of my business, ye' know !

“Gimme de box, Pete ! *Quick* !” yelled Larry, suddenly  
 breaking off. “Yonder comes a soft ! ‘I've sot my life



upon a cast, an' I will stan' th' hazzard, ef I die!' Stag me wile I work 'im!" And, swinging the box, Larry rushed toward the stranger, yelling: "Shine! *Patent* leather shine!"

Suddenly he halted, turned silently and returned to the other boy in deep disgust.

"Well! Wot's hup?" asked Pete.

"Look wot the thing's got on! Patent leathers!" Mr. Miggs answered in supreme contempt.

"Sa-ay, Larry!" Thus Pete, in a tone of deep conviction—"Sa-ay! Patent leathers is *low*!"

Kyle Hardy, in his patent leathers, strode slowly on; his mood, judging from scowling brows, anything but a frolic one. He paused under a sickly lamp and looked at his watch.

"Curse the watch! Stopped," he muttered. "Everything goes wrong! Nigger luck all through! Wonder if that's an omen of bad luck with Tip?" He showed his teeth in his unmirthful smile; but drew Miles' brief note from his pocket and reread it carefully. With somewhat lightened brow, he lit a cigar and slowly crossed to the little street, where that honest tradesman, Herr Isaac Schonstein, threw out the banner of the Lombards.

As he did so, Pete wildly seized his box from Larry and rushed for a man, in evening dress and light ulster, who slowly followed the gambler out of the shadow. As Pete did so, Larry recognized his acquaintance of the afternoon.

"Hello! Kurn'l!" he yelled. "Wot are *you* after roun' here? Come fur *me*?" But, as Wilmot Browne made a quick sign for silence, he added, lower: "*Ke*-rect, Kurn'l! I'm muzzled!"

"I don't want you yet," Will said, "but I may, soon. I suppose I can trust you to keep your eyes open and your mouth shut?"



"That's me! Yer just *kin!*" Larry replied. "I'm a oyster, I am; wen ther's a doller in it!"

"Keep about here, then." Will hesitated, as he turned away; then asked: "Larry, have you seen th' old 'un?"

"Nary old 'un, sence I brung th' note," Larry responded. "'Spectin' *him?*"

"Yes; rather. If he *should* pass, and ask any questions, you say I went round that corner."

Then—after another careful and anxious scrutiny of the square for Beagle, whose missing presence he could not comprehend—Will walked into the narrow street and stood in the shadow opposite the pawn-shop.

The street was almost empty, only an occasional rapid passer showing. Honest avocations had put up their shutters long since, the only light on the block gleaming through the variegated assortment of belongings in Mr. Schonstein's window.

But the minutes passed relentlessly, and Will looked frequently at his watch. A dozen theories of Beagle's absence offered themselves. Had he unaccountably missed the place? Was Hardy's presence at the pawn-shop, twice that day, on other matters? Had *he* now gone to meet Jackpots at some other tryst where Beagle was?

More nervous, as the minutes dragged with leaden sloth, Will heard nine chimes from a distant steeple; and, almost ere the echo died, a short man ambled around the corner, shuffled near the shop, then hesitated and turned back. Even distance and dim light left him sure of his man; but his movement puzzled the amateur detective, and he stealthily followed the retreating form.

It was Tip Miles, and his flank movement was only prudential. As he had before remarked to himself, his game was a desperate one, and he had no idea of losing one point possible to score. When Hardy's brougham dashed by him that



morning, Miles had not seen his old pal's face since it lowered at him across the Shiner's Gap; but he retained vivid recollection of his ugly temper and prompt handiness with knife or pistol.

Passing the square, he had seen Larry on guard, and now he shuffled back and hailed him cheerily: "Hello, youngster! So, this is your beat? No performance to-night?"

"Kerect, guv'ner! Closed fur the *ben.* to-morrer night. Gran' Reech-er-*loo* maté-*nay*! But I tuk yer note all th' same!"

"And delivered it, O. K.?"

"Yer kin speckerlate! Gin it inter his own han' at St. Mark's Place," the Leading Man replied.

Miles looked keenly at the boy; but his uncertain-aged face was expressionless as a Chinese.

"Ever seen him before?" he asked quickly.

"Never!" the boy replied with equal promptness. "Seen him sence, tho'! He lit a *she*-root an' yer kin emergrate but he mosied roun' that corner, quart-a-hour ago!"

"So; the Coyote's on hand! Well, he's keen, after those papers. Have 'em he *must*; and so he shall—after he has paid six years' storage on 'em! But a cool hand and slippery is Kyle Hardy!" So saying to himself, Miles passed the corner—hesitated—turned back and stopped under a lamp. "Yes; if any deal *does* lose me the age, *this* will double my chances, halve the Coyote's and save old Baylor's jackpot!"

Taking some papers from his pocket, he selected a circular in blank envelope, writing hastily on the unprinted sheet. Sealing it, he directed the envelope to Wilmot Browne; and that volunteer detective saw him pass back toward the boys in the deep shadow.

Not daring to be seen himself, Browne strained his eyes on the lamp beyond them. Miles did not pass it. He had



stopped in the shadow and said briefly : " Larry, would you like to make two dollars ? "

" Jedge ! *That's* me, yer may gamble ! Wot must I *do* ? " And Master Miggs jumped from his box briskly.

" Nothing ! " Miles answered.

" I *kin* do that ! It's m' perfesh. Were mus' I *go* ? "

" Nowhere ! " again responded the snuffy Sphinx.

" That suits hegzact—Hi lives there ! "

" I think you're sharp — *and honest*," Miles said quietly.

" I saved your life this morning ; now you hold on to this letter like wax, until I come back ! If ten o'clock strikes and I am not here, take that letter to the house where you followed me to-day. Ask for Captain Wilmot Browne, and *he'll* not grudge you a fiver ! "

" Yer may crystallise ! " cried Larry. "*St-st-t* ! Here, Pete ! " And as the other boy approached, he dropped the letter in the boot-box, seized him by the shoulders and jammed him down upon it.

" What in thunder are you doing ? " cried Miles.

" That's all reg'lar, guv'ner ! " the boy answered. " Hit's my post-offis an' Pete's my preserdenshurl pos'master ; Oh ! *he'll* stick, yer may propose ! He's a reg'lar settin' hen, tell he hatches out that fiver ! "

" Well, keep her safe ; the letter's important," Miles said. To which Mr. Miggs deigned only the confident reply :

" Yer may bet yer boots ! "

A moment later Will Browne slunk again into the shadow ; for he saw Tip Miles reappear in the lamp-light, pass briskly toward the pawn-shop and enter, after a cautious glance up and down the street. But he did not see the grim smile upon the not handsome features of that eccentric personage ; nor could he hear the low muttered words :

" *Now*, Tip Miles, you hold a sequence-flush ! Better let *him* do all the raisin' ! One more deal, and, by the 'Tarnal Jackpot ! you'll rake Kyle Hardy's pile ! "



## CHAPTER XVI.

## GREEK MEETS GREEK.

"Good evening, Mr. Schonstein," Miles said, in his old-time manner, as he entered the pawn-shop.

"Goot efening, Meester Miltes," returned the pawnbroker, with a grim smile. "Dere vos ein shent shoost agzing off you. He vos een der barlor now."

"Asking for me? Dear me! I *may* know the gent, but I don't — quite remember!" And, with another keen glance at the empty street, Miles slipped round the screen at the rear of the store and entered the door it hid, finding himself in the dingy, stuffy "parlor."

As he did so, the Herr Schonstein began to put up his shutters and close the shop.

Will Browne slipped to the corner and gazed anxiously around. What *could* have chanced to detain Beagle, he wondered. He had run the foxes to hole, alone and unassisted. Indeed, he had given the detective valuable, positive information, yet it was long past the hour, and his hands were tied. Even could he enter the house, force was not to be thought of; he had no proof, and even with it, *he* could make no arrest.

Fevered with doubt and regret, he strode up to the pawnbroker, saying as calmly as he could:

"You keep open late, my friend."

The man locked a shutter, answering but one word:

"*Nein!*"

"I've a little business," Will said desperately. "My watch——"



"*Nein!*" again came shortly, and the last shutter snapped.

"I'll pay *well!* Make out a ticket for only five ——"

"*Nein!*" Mr. Schonstein slipped inside his door and locked it in the face of business!

Then, with commendable prudence, he turned out the gas, opened a small back door and, slipping noiselessly into the grimy alleyway, applied both ear and eye to the shutter of the little back room.

Kyle Hardy was striding up and down as Miles entered, and only saw him as he turned. Then he advanced with extended hand, but face that belied the gesture, as he exclaimed:

"Well, Tip, I'm glad to see you! You're looking well!"

"Am I? That's a comfort," responded Mr. Miles, presumably not seeing the extended hand he did not take.

"And where have you been hiding all these years?" the other asked, determined not to be rebuffed.

"I haven't been hiding," Miles answered dryly. "I haven't any *alias*, and I'm still an American!"

"Well, what have you been doing?" Hardy persisted.

"The respectable! I've turned over a new leaf. I'll be damned if I haven't, and I'd a chance to be damned if I didn't!"

"That's clever!" Hardy said, as he sat down.

"Is it? That's cheering. Yes, in future I shall stop chipping in for small rascalities and lay for the big Jackpot of shabby-genteel respectability!"

"But what's your game?"

"Business; I'm in charge of a farm!" Miles replied. "Don't stare; they don't raise the ante on it—nor anything else just now. But say, Kyle, you don't pay for all those personals and send me your new names and addresses only to inquire after my health?"



"Well, no!" Hardy answered, staring keenly at him. "But it does seem to me that your memory has wonderfully improved!"

"Oh! yes; I remember *some* things very well now!" And Old Jackpots sat opposite his former pal, never taking his eyes from his face.

"Well, Tip, I hope you brought those papers," Hardy said.

"Why should I?" Miles queried innocently.

"Because," the other replied shortly, "they belong to me!"

"Hardly!" Miles said, still very quietly. "They belong to the first police officer who can get his claws on 'em!"

"You'd *dare* to sell them!" Hardy half rose in his anger.

"Certainly; but you have—the *refusal*!" Miles answered.

"Didn't I write so? I don't quite—remember!"

"Stow that! Shell the papers out, then!" Hardy growled.

"I haven't got 'em about me!"

"I believe you lie!" Hardy again started to his feet.

"Frequently; but not this time," Miles responded. "I know their value to you, Kyle, and I wouldn't trust myself with 'em in the streets, at night!"

"Tip Miles! If you try to play it on me ——" the other began fiercely; and his hand went to his breast.

"Never mind your knife, Kyle," the older man interrupted coolly, "I know your handy style with it; but, if I am not safe and sound, an hour hence, those papers will be safe with ——"

"Well?" Hardy interrupted, dropping his hand.

"With an old friend of yours, Kyle—Colonel Randolph Baylor!"

"You idiot! To take *me* for one!" Hardy replied. "The man's in Europe, this year past!"

"No, Kyle, it's you that's abroad—all abroad! Baylor and his nephew arrived home this morning."



"This morning!" Hardy echoed, in genuine surprise.

"Yes; only a few hours before Colonel de la Plata called on his beautiful niece!" Miles answered slowly.

"Damn you! You know ——"

"Not much, Kyle," the other interrupted. "But I *do* know I'm devilish hard up!"

The other man, striding about the small room, stopped abruptly and faced Miles: "Well, what will you take?"

"What will you give?"

"Will five hundred do?"

"A thousand will do better!"

"You *have* a conscience!"

"Then you should, also. You told me those papers were worth ten thousand, at Washington; and, strange to say, *I quite remember!*"

"Well; you shall have the money!"

"I thought I should!"

Again Kyle Hardy stopped short before him.

"Tip Miles!" he said brutally. "Don't you go too far. It's a new game for *you* to play *me* for a flat! And if I do lose my temper ——"

"You'll lose your revenge on Baylor, *plus* ten thousand dollars," Miles finished for him. "Yes; this morning Baylor returned; and his daughter ——"

"*His daughter!*" Hardy stopped, staring blankly.

"Yes; the wild gal that tricked us in the Shiners' Gap," Miles said, watching the other's face. "You know he adopted her?"

"Oh!" The gambler drew a deep, long breath. "I was thinking of that other; the kid he sent from New Orleans, on the steamer! The very idea was a freezer!"

He resumed his restless walk; Miles answering no word, but following him with sharp eyes. At last Hardy stopped at the table once more.



"You know, Tip," he said, with a shiver, and an odd gleam in his eyes—"sometimes I think I'm getting shaky! Damned if I ain't beginning to have—nerves!"

He paused; looked strangely at his companion; and, drawing a small flask from his pocket, added:

"Have a drop of brandy? It's *good*; Orphic Club!"

"Don't care if I do! Only a drop, though; to clinch our trade," Miles answered, reaching for a small glass on the table.

"No; not that one!" Hardy said quickly. "I used that while I waited for you."

There was a small quantity of liquor in the bottom of the glass. Hardy drew it toward him; reaching another from the small stand near. Then he poured a liberal quantity in each glass; and, returning the stopper of the flask, dropped it to the floor.

"Curse my awkwardness," he grumbled, with his head under the table. "Hold the light, Tip!"

Miles held the lamp down near the floor; both men looking for the cork. But Hardy's left hand, resting above the table, deftly shifted the glasses on it. As both rose, and he adjusted the recovered cork, Hardy said:

"Well, Tip, here's luck to you and your reformation, and to the papers, when I get them!"

"When you get them!" Miles echoed; and, as Hardy drained his glass, he also swallowed part of his. "Well, if that's Orphic Club brandy," he added, "I don't think I like good liquor! *Pah!* It's bitter as Kirschwasser!"

"It *has* a peculiar zip," Hardy answered, with an odd smile. "But you never were much of a drinker, Tip."

"Not much," Miles said carelessly. "But I was telling you about Baylor's daughter ——"

"Damnation! Stow that word, can't you!" cried the other with white face. "She's *not* his daughter! I tell you,



it's making me nervous, though we know *she can not* turn up in this world! Curse me, Tip, if I don't see that young 'un's eyes often, lately! *There!* I see them over your shoulder now!"

Miles kept his eyes riveted on the other man's, but he answered simply:

"Why, I don't see how you can let *that* worry you, Kyle!"

"Nor I, either," Hardy replied uneasily. "But it *does!* It's *nerves*, I tell you! I've had nigger luck and a tough racket. Brandy's the only thing that helps me, Tip. That night, when I floated on a spar five hours, to save the kid drowning in the gulf; when I nearly lost my own life for hers, I never meant to do what I did! No! *No!* Not *that!*" And the man shuddered.

The hand around Tip Miles' glass closed on it almost hard enough to smash it; and the eyes, still riveted on the restless-moving gambler, gleamed strangely from under their red lids. But the voice was quiet—almost his old drawl—that said:

"That's an odd story about saving a kid! You kind o' mentioned it long ago—if I remember?"

"Curse it! *I do!*" Hardy cried, pouring more brandy and swallowing it greedily. "I *couldn't help* saving it! *Her* baby, with May Redfern's own eyes! And, Tip, I kept the kid for over a year! But bad luck came, and—Hell's blazes! What *could* a river gambler, knocking from pillar to post, do with a gal baby?" He drew closer to Miles, his eyes blood-shot and his breath labored, as he whispered hoarsely:

"But, as I hope to escape torment! I *never did mean that!*"

Was it confirmation of his own hidden suspicion, that made Tip Miles' brain suddenly reel and grow light? For it was only by a mighty effort of will, that he could sit in his chair; and for a moment, he only saw Hardy dimly and heard his voice, as through the boom of the surf.



But he recovered, as Hardy said: "But curse the past! while there's a future. If old Baylor's back, so much more reason to rush the Washington racket. When will I get the papers?"

"To-morrow, at two o'clock," Miles answered; and in spite of every effort, he yawned wearily as he spoke: "Meet me then at the old red farm-house, Browne Beach, on the Sound."

"Why *there*?" Hardy cried angrily. "Curse you! The papers are mine!"

"They *will* be, when you come," Miles answered, in a weary tone. "They are hidden there!" and again he yawned.

Hardy stopped; looked steadily at Miles; then answered more quietly:

"All right, Tip; we won't quarrel after all these years. I'll be on hand."

"Certainly, we won't," Miles said, rather unsteadily; as if with strong effort. "And in proof of good faith, here's the key of the old farm-house. Bring it with you to-morrow. Trains every half hour—station Long ——"

Hardy took the key; again looking keenly at Miles, whose heavy eyelids drooped as he spoke.

"All right, Tip!" he repeated, with his peculiar, hard smile. "But now, I *must* leave you. I've got a soft thing at the Orphic. Good night, Tip; I'll be at the Beach to-morrow"—and as he closed the door behind him, he added—"before you are, too, you idiot!"

Miles sat perfectly still; his hands upon the table, his brain a blank—for quite a minute. Then, with mighty effort, he shook off the drowsy oppression; rising unsteadily to his feet.

"A bad egg, the Coyote!" he muttered. "But he can't make a progressive Jack, on *my* deal! The cold-blooded



devil!" And his weariness left him a moment, as he spoke — "to save that babe ; and then to —— Well ! All will be squared to-morrow ! Lemme see ! The papers *are* his ; *that's forgery !* His key to the farm-house is false ; *that's burglary !* If taken with the papers on him, *that's proof !*"

As he spoke, the dizzy feeling returned ; and Miles, grasping the table, sunk slowly back into his chair, muttering :

"Will Browne won't get —— despatch after all. I'll go and tell Larry ——"

His arms stretched out on the table ; his head fell heavily upon them ; and the Yankee clock upon the mantel struck——*ten !*

At the moment Kyle Hardy peered into the door ; listened an instant to the other's heavy, regular breathing ; then, with scant ceremony, examined his pockets, replacing carefully the worthless papers found there. Then, he again passed swiftly from the room, as he said :

"Curse him ! For once, he was *not* lying ! I might have saved my chloral !"





## CHAPTER XVII.

## A SOCIETY OBJECT LESSON.

The Lexington-avenue mansion was, as usual, ablaze with light ; but, somehow, its occupants seemed less brilliant than their surroundings.

Mrs. Beverly Baylor Browne, having drawn off her forces from Will's attack in the dining-room, had marshalled them in the drawing-room, and now she proceeded with instruction in social tactics, which did not fall on all-attentive ears.

Juny, the Roman mother felt, needed a long course and a strong in society conventionality. She had natural style, Mrs. Browne knew, and that morning had convinced her that it was backed by clear common sense. But the *convenances* were that lady's creed, and these the ruthless naturalness of her adopted niece smashed on every possible occasion.

"And you must comprehend, my dear Juniata," she was saying, in conclusion of a long lecture on the absolute necessity of etiquette, "that without observance of conventional rules, there could be no common ground on which nice people could at once fix their social relations to each other."

"And am I to understand, aunt," Juny said, waking from innate courtesy out of her reverie on far different matters, "that to be a social success I must forget nature entirely?"

"Not exactly," Mrs. Browne answered placidly. "To a certain extent, Nature is a very good thing in her way. But, for social success, Nature must ever be guarded and controlled by society custom. Orson, my dear, may have been a most estimable person, yet one would prefer having Valentine to dinner !"



"Well, you are right, doubtless," Juny answered wearily. "Of course, Aunt Browne, I know nothing of these matters. How should I? But it does seem to me, that if you polish away all naturalness, people might as well be only puppets. Art is a very good thing; but then, may not one have a little too much art?"

Mrs. Browne fanned herself with what Alexander Smith calls "arm-sweep superb," as she answered:

"Your views are eminently unconventional, my dear Juniata! Ere long, you will learn that our entire social system is based on art."

"Of course it is!" Gus broke in. "That's why I always tell ma she should dote on M. A!"

"Augustine! Why will you not oblige me and call that person *Mr. Lake*? It is certainly as short, and immeasurably more respectable! But *his* art is no higher than that of the dry-goods person who sells your costume, or of the *modiste* who makes it. Now, there is Colonel de la Plata——"

"You admire *his* art, mamma?" Gus asked quickly, shooting a glance at Juny. "You think *him* awfully crimp, don't you?"

"His is the art social. He understands the conventions," Mrs. Browne replied.

The two girls again exchanged glances.

"And *he* is a social success, is he not?" Juny asked.

"Emphatically," the social leader answered. "Society should only be too grateful for such accessions!"

"Does society know anything of his antecedents?" the girl rejoined, her naturalness defiant.

"I presume so, my dear. It is understood that he has great wealth and old family. Naturally, with his style, he has credentials. But, society can not afford to be *suspicious* when persons are plainly eligible!"



"Well, *I* don't like him," Juny said bluntly. "And I *am* suspicious!"

"So am I!" Gus exclaimed. "He's not one bit crimp!"

Here was open mutiny—absolute defiance of the society tactics in which this veteran campaigner had been carefully drilling them for an hour! So, as court-martial was not practicable remedy at that moment, Mrs. Browne took the alternative of retreat behind her barricades.

"These are impulses," she said grandly. "They are the results of ignorance; of false pride in defying convention. I can not listen to such absurdities, Augustine! And you, Juniata, are wrong—entirely wrong! No! Do not answer me, either of you, until you learn to reason!"

Checked, but undefeated, Mrs. Browne swept her colors off the field, with drums beating; Gus lolling in a rocking chair, while Juny moved restlessly about the room. But soon the door bell rang, and shortly Wash announced:

"Miss Gustine, a leddy axe ter see yo' berry per'tickler. She say it' mighty 'portant, sho's yo' born!"

"Me?" Gus answered. "It must be mamma, unless her card ——"

But before she could finish, the tall, graceful figure of Lili Duvrai, clad in deep black, swept by the negro and stood erect in the center of the room.

"No, Miss Browne—if you be Miss Augustine Browne," she said, looking from one girl to the other. "It is *you* I desire to see. Pardon of a stranger intrusion; but my object will excuse, if you will but hear me!"

She threw back the long veil, showing her beautiful olive face, deadly pale; the luminous brown eyes downcast and ringed with deep, black circles. Yet the gentle grace of the woman would have drawn the others to her, the sadness of face and pose making her even more resistless.



"Pray have a seat," Gus said graciously. "And pardon me, I am ignorant who ——"

"Yes, I know. You have never heard my name," Lili answered, with a deep sigh. "And you never will, after to-night. Not two hours it is that your name was equally unknown to me ; but now I come—if you will bear with me—if you will be patient—to do you great service !"

"It is very strange ! I don't know if I should ——" Gus began ; but as a bright flush rose to Lili's face, she checked herself and added : "Yes ; I will listen. You can do me no harm ; and you are evidently—*a lady!* Pray be seated."

The olive face was swept by a flood of crimson, as the Octoroon caught the title ; but she turned it aside and, not taking the indicated chair, answered gently :

"I shall be brief as possible ; and shall strive not to wound you, Miss Browne. May I ask, do you know Colonel Manuel de la Plata ?"

Both girls started, exchanging meaning looks ; and Gus reddened to the roots of her hair. But she answered quietly :

"I *did* know Colonel de la Plata."

"Again you must pardon me," Lili said, with slight hesitation. "And, with your parents' knowledge and consent, he came—*here?*"

"Your questions certainly *are* strange," Gus replied, with quiet dignity. "I might properly decline to be catechised by a perfect stranger ——" But Juny—standing intent, with lips half parted—made her an imploring gesture ; and she added : "Still, as you seem to know something of this person, I may inform you that he did visit this house, but will do so no more !"

"Are you *sure?*" Lili's voice trembled. "Ah ! Mademoiselle, you are young, gentle, pure ! You can not know woman's heart, when tried ! You *do not* know this man !"



"You are right; I do not know him, *now*! Therefore, further confidence is needless," Gus answered frigidly. But, beneath the ice, feminine curiosity gnawed her with sharpest incisors, to know who and what was this beautiful inquisitor; who *might* have been her rival.

"Yet has he dared speak to you words which were insult for you to hear! Words which he had no right to speak!" Lili went on—quietly at first, but with anger and emotion rising as she spoke. "'This man—unfit to touch the latchet of your shoe! Unfit to breathe air the same that you breathe—he has dared to deceive us both!'"

"I can not permit——" Gus began haughtily.

But again, Juny—with wide eyes fastened on Lili's face—raised her hand, exclaiming, between warning and entreaty:

"Gus! You *must*!"

"Yes; you *must*, poor child!" Lili said, in low, musical tone, from which anger had died—"For child you are to me, though your years may not be less. What I say pains *me*—not you!"

"Then, *who* are you?" Gus asked shortly.

"Lili Duvrai—*Hardy*!" the Octoroon replied slowly.

"Then, what right have you to intrude here——"

"Oh! Gus! She *has* the right!" Juny cried, with glowing cheeks and pity in her voice. For when the girl had spoken Hardy's name, after her own, it fell on Juny as a revelation.

"I have the highest right!" Lili went on, with pathetic humility. "'The right of a woman, who could not save herself, to save her blind sister!'"

"Stop, if you please!" Gus was her mother's daughter now. "Your views may be honest; they certainly are wholly unconventional! I am not in need of missionary work, thank you! And as for supposing *me* a possible rival with Colonel de la Plata——"



"I do not so think," Lili interrupted gently. "The man you mean is—*nothing to me!* But, child, there is no Colonel de la Plata. That is but the *alias* of Kyle Hardy, a gambler and adventurer!"

"And your name!" Juny exclaimed. "You are his——"

"I have been to him more than most *wives!*" Lili broke in quickly, but turning away her face. "Six years ago he took me from my home; an innocent child, trusting and loving. In the years since, he has been my world—my all! In health or illness; this land or that; poverty or wealth, all was same to me, while I dreamed *he loved me!* Lately, I felt he tired of me. I would not confess—I struggled so against it! Maman warned me in vain! But now—I *know!* I do not blame you, mademoiselle! I have not jealousy; for my love is dead! *Mon dieu!* My heart also is dead with it! But, before I leave him and this place forever, I come to say to you ——"

"You need not!" Gus cried, with real feeling. "Spare yourself further pain, poor, misused wife! This very day another warned me. But, before I dreamed he was *not* the rich Brazilian, I had ordered him from this house!" And woman's sympathy controlling the society girl, Gus Browne took, very gently, the slim, fair hand of the Octoroon.

But Lili shrunk from her, withdrawing her fingers from the other's clasp, with a shiver, as she dropped into a chair with the moan:

"I am not—*his wife!*"

"But your name!" Gus cried, in wonder. "His sister?"

Lili shook her head sadly, rising as she said:

"Let me go! I *can not* explain; *you* would not understand! What I *was* to him, that am I no more! I have said my heart is dead; so, also, *he* is dead! You will forgive me—no? I could but make effort to save you from him—from yourself, perhaps—when I read this!"



With still averted head, Lili held out the note Hardy had given her. With crimsoned cheeks and flashing eyes, Gus read the lines; clenching her little hand as she cried:

“Insolent! From my equal; but from *him*!”

Lili turned slowly toward the door, as Gus recalled her better self, gazing at the girl with some pity, some dread. But Juny rushed impulsively toward the stranger, seizing both her hands as she cried:

“You came to save a sister from the suffering you now feel. We can not let you go like this!”

Upon the woman's bruised heart, the sympathy of the pure girl was poured as balm. Her hands were not withdrawn, but great drops of relief welled from the eyes and rolled down the sallow oval of her averted face.

“Pure, true-hearted child!” she exclaimed. “May the good God grant that *you* never need sympathy from woman, as now I need it! To my grave will I carry your words! But what am I doing?” And she struggled to release her hands. “Let me go! You do not know! I am unworthy to touch your feet!”

But the strong, firm hands of the shiners' girl would not release hers; and the fresh, brave voice spoke from Juny's heart:

“You sacrificed your feelings for *her*! She thanks you; *I* do! You came as a stranger; go as our friend, poor, mis-used wife!”

Again the shiver passed over the Octoroon. She broke her hands from Juny's clasp, pressing them over her face; and her voice was a low wail that cried:

“Oh, God! Never before I knew how precious was that word! But I told you, I am *not—his wife*!”

“Juny!” Gus exclaimed; trembling and with white lips. And looking from one to the other, Juny seemed unable to comprehend:



"But your name is Hardy? You said, for years, you——"

"You can not understand," the unnerved Octoroon forced herself to say. "Your education, your society, your laws, all teach you to despise such as I am! *Mon dieu!* How cruel are those laws, to let us give the love, the duty of a wife, and yet forbid the empty name, and drive us to our shame!"

"Forbid! Drive!" Gus stood amazed.

"Yes; forbid us all but mockery of life!" Lili answered fiercely. No drooping now; her head erect, the eyes flaming from her pale face. "What they call law visits on us the sins of generations past; drives us to crawl and beg for what is our right! Neither sympathy nor pity—not justice even may we hope! Oh! Such as *you* can never comprehend what *I* am, across the gulf between us! And, yet, I also am——a *woman!*"

Gus had drawn farther away as Lili spoke; but Juny—strangely lacking in knowledge that most girls gain at boarding school—only stared, fascinated by the beauty of the speaker and the glow of words that unmistakably rushed straight from her heart.

"What *do* you mean?" her parted lips half gasped.

For one single instant, Lili Duvrai stood like a statue of Defiance, her head thrown back, her eyes flashing scorn. The next, her clasped hands fell heavily before her; each word dropped from her white lips, solemn as the record of her own doom:

"I am——a *negro!*"

With the words, her head was raised again and she turned haughtily from the room.

Gus shuddered and turned away, the gambler's note dropping to her feet. Juny glanced at her.

"Gus! how *can* you? She is a woman—true-hearted, brave, who came to save you!"



But Gus never moved ; and swept by impulse, Juny rushed into the hall.

“ Stop ! One instant ! ” she cried. “ Do not mistake us so ! Who and what you are I know not—care not ! You came to save ; - you *shall not* go despised ! If you have sinned, God will forgive ! And what are we to judge ? ”

She took both the woman's hands, no longer resisting now, looking into her face with the bravery of that purity which knows no fear.

And again Lili's proud head bowed low ; sobs shook her frame, and Juny felt hot tears upon her hand.

“ You say we shall never see you again ? ” she said earnestly. “ Then take with you knowledge that we thank you—that we know you are unjust to yourself ! Good bye, and may God bless you ! ”

And raising her pure, fresh face, “ the shiners' gal ” pressed her lips upon the birth-stained brow of the Octoroon.





## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE SPIDER, OR THE FLY?

When Mr. Tip Miles had despatched his missive to Kyle Hardy, he walked slowly around Madison Square, apparently in deep thought.

As he had previously remarked to himself, he had a desperate game of bluff to play with his former reckless and unscrupulous partner ; and, as he himself would have put it, Old Jackpots was not the man to "lose the pot, on any outside chances." Though he could not fully comprehend the clinging desire for revenge—coupled, perhaps, with profit, which Hardy had nursed all those years, since they parted at the Shiners' Gap—the fact of its existence seemed very plain to him.

He had fully meant to meet the black gambler and sell him back the forged papers he had captured on that eventful night, provided he could do so to his own personal profit and still not "lose the age" on him.

But the rapid run of events, that day, now somewhat changed his plan. Haste was all essential, if Hardy had learned that the colonel and his nephew were now in New York ; and, moreover, the sight of Juny—added to his own conviction, endorsed by his singular employer, Mrs. Browne, that he would lose his still more singular occupation—was added reason for at once closing around Hardy the meshes of the net he was weaving for him.

At last, the old man's troubled face settled back into its wonted calm ; his pace quickened, and he struck out down Broadway for a noted detective bureau.



"I'm not much of a sailor," he muttered; "but I do see signs of a storm. An anchor to windward is no end of a good thing to hold to, when you begin to drift."

Into the detective's office Tip Miles shuffled, as boldly as though he had never put himself anywhere near the further side of the law's pale.

"I want to see the manager," he said quietly to the clerk, busily writing in a bulky register.

"Is the case specially important?" that official queried, without looking up.

"Most cases are where a detective is needed," Miles replied quietly.

"Can you state it to me?" the clerk asked, looking at his querist this time.

"I can," Miles answered; but, as the clerk drew a pad toward him and prepared to write, he added: "But I do not propose to do so."

There was no little of "the insolence of office" in the clerk's eye, as it took in his visitor's uncouth air and strangely-cut clothes, not omitting the green patch from the mental inventory.

"Have a seat, then," he said shortly. "The chief has just telephoned that he will be here soon."

Miles took the chair and newspaper indicated by the lordly nod, the scribe returned to his register, and, ere long, Captain Hunter Beagle walked into the office and, passing into the private room behind it, struck his gong sharply.

"When did that man come in?" he asked the clerk.

"Ten minutes ago, sir. He asked for the chief."

"Send him in!"

And, as the clerk retired, the thief-taker laughed low and said to himself: "Odd *he* should hunt *me*! A queer case of the fly inviting the spider!"



Miles entered and quietly seated himself by the great man; and the latter, remarking that it was warm for the season, waited for him to open his case.

"I want a detective to-morrow, at the 2:00 P. M. Long Island train," Miles said promptly. "He must be a first-class man, reliable and with good nerve."

"On what sort of a case?" asked Beagle.

"Simple; very probably dangerous," Miles replied. "I want him to make an arrest in the act."

"On what charge?" Beagle again queried.

"Burglary will do to begin with. There may be others; and, probably, the act in which he is taken will be sufficient for conviction."

"Um—um! What point on the sound?" asked Beagle reflectively. His mind traveled straight to Browne Beach; but it could not fathom the object of an arrest there. It could not be his other "shadow," of course. *He* was Miles' confederate in those papers. Perhaps—Beagle continued his mental calculation—this is only a clever ruse of the old fox; a double on my shadow, to which he has somehow tumbled. But his rapid thought did not interfere with his understanding the reply of his visitor:

"I will show him the point. Let him meet me on the train and recognize me by a sign, if there is another man with me. I'd like to see the man now so as to know him. My name is Miles—Tip Miles."

"Oho!" Beagle said to himself. "The old fox does not suspect the shadow. The fly walks right into the parlor." But he only said aloud: "Is the case an important one?"

"Very. I want your best man."

"I am my own best man in delicate and important cases," and Captain Beagle smiled.

"This is both," Miles answered briefly. "Can *you* come?"



Beagle's eye ran rapidly over a memorandum book, and his mind ran still more rapidly over the situation. It was the luckiest stroke of his career. Hardy he was certain of. *He* was too well known to the authorities of several large cities as "a dangerous and suspicious," not to make the Brazilian grandee's disguise simply penetrable. But Miles was so open and plain in his life that he had almost doubted, during his long shadow of the man, if he were really the "Jackpots" of the past, described to him by Will Browne. After a moment's pause, he said :

"Yes ; at 1:00 P. M. to-morrow I have nothing very imperative. I can go with you. Give me a description of the man I am to get."

Miles looked keenly at the detective. Then he buttoned himself up mentally, and answered quietly :

"What's the need ? I'll be there to show him to you."

Captain Beagle's cool grey eye never left the other's as he spoke ; and promptly, as he finished, he said :

"As you please, Mr. Miles. I'll go with you to Browne Beach."

The grey eyes saw Miles start slightly, though he answered calmly :

"I didn't say that was the place."

"Did you not ? Then I may be mistaken. But I hope this is no trivial matter of some little game of poker, something connected with—*Jackpots*."

But 'Tip Miles' card education did not let him betray himself often. His eyes were as filmy and his face as wooden as ever under that keen, cross-examining stare.

"I never play poker," he answered quietly. "This is *business*."

"Connected with your management of Colonel Baylor's farm during his absence ?" Beagle asked innocently. "Pardon curiosity ; but that is my profession, you know."



"That's all regular," Miles replied naturally. "Your business is to know other people's. Mine is no secret. But this matter has nothing to do with the farm."

Beagle was silent a moment. That this was no fool he felt. Pumping would gain nothing ; a bold stroke might. Should he try it? At last he said :

"By the way, Mr. Miles, what ever became of an old friend of yours—Kyle Hardy, the Coyote?"

The filmy eyes stared back steadily into the cool grey ones and the wooden features grew only more ligneous, as Tip Miles answered slowly :

"I can't, for the life of me, make out this hand. Are you bluffing me, or am I bluffing at you?"

The detective laughed naturally.

"Well, you are still a cool hand, Old Jackpots. But I merely asked from curiosity. I had a case to follow up for him, years ago, when you and he were on the river. It's of no consequence."

"Nor to me, neither," Tip answered, with cherubic innocence. "I haven't seen Kyle Hardy for six years this month. Well, you'll meet me at the depot ; one o'clock sharp?"

"I will, Mr. Miles," Beagle answered, striking his gong. "Carson, enter Mr. Miles' name and address in the confidential register. Enter charge for consultation. This is mere form, Mr. Miles ;" and Captain Beagle bowed his visitor out. Scarcely had the door closed on him, when the detective threw back the top of a drawer at his right hand and exposed the key of a telegraphic instrument. Rapidly calling up some one, he ticked out this order :

"Odd-looking old man ; green shade over eye ; answers to name of Tip Miles ; will leave this office in a minute. Shadow him closely and report here 8:00 P. M. ; or, by wire from nearest point, if he meets the tall, dark foreigner, with moustache, you shadowed to the Orphic last week."



As Tip Miles left the front office, three minutes later, he muttered to himself:

"Well! By the eternal Jackpot! that was a close shave. He's evidently been shadowing me; but *what* for? I suspect he's shadowing Kyle, too. If so, is it in connection? Well; it was lucky I advanced that meeting to-night; and after *that*, he can shadow and be damned! But I hope he'll meet me at the train at one o'clock to-morrow."

Deep in this self-converse, Tip almost ran into a seedy, quiet man, just ascending the steps of the basement store beneath the office. The man might have been a traveling preacher, from his face and manner; but his dress was not clerical.

Apologizing, Miles walked eastward to Fourth avenue, crossed to Third and stopped to look into a show window. The clerical-looking man was reflected, as he lit a cigar at a stand across the street.

"Oho! I *am* shadowed, eh?" Miles said to himself. "Well, I'll try and give him a little bit out of my old river experience!"

He turned into Third avenue, stopped at a modest hotel and strode up to the office.

"Hello, Mr. Miles," said the clerk cheerily. "When did *you* come in?"

"This morning," Miles answered. "Give me my old room. I want to take a nap. Call me for supper at seven, sharp."

"Front—*S-s-t!* Show gentleman 86, third! Baggage, Mr. Miles? No? Call 7, sharp. Room, sir?"

"Yes," answered the clerical-looking gentleman, as he read Miles' name on the register. "Is 84, third, vacant?"

"Yes—Register? Baggage? No? Supper?"

"Yes, about six-thirty. Put me on the call. I *may* be asleep."



"S-s-st! Front! lively there! Show gentleman up; 84—third; no baggage; call 6:30 sharp!" cried the clerk in brisk monotone; and off trotted the bell-boy with the clerical-seeming stranger.

Meanwhile, Mr. Tip Miles had dismissed his bell-boy, locked the door inside and pocketed the key. Then, singularly enough, he never paused until he had stepped to the sill of the low window giving upon the flat tin roof. He gave a searching glance at the windows above and opposite; then, with the confidence of long familiarity, he stepped out lightly, entered a window across the angle and found himself in a hallway near a staircase.

Swiftly descending this, Mr. Miles passed through the ladies' entrance into a side street. Then he quietly remarked to himself:

"By the 'tarnal Jackpot! Next time they want an old river sharp, they'd better send a grown-up thief-taker for a shadow!"





## CHAPTER XIX.

## GIRL AND GIRL.

Juny stood silent in the hall of the grand mansion, when Lili closed the door; the gas jets flaring down upon her gleaming neck and arms, and showing the fair young face shadowed with conflicting thoughts.

Her deepest sympathies were aroused for the unhappy woman, whose sad story—so briefly outlined—had opened to her a new chapter in the book of life.

That Lili was a sinner and an outcast, she dimly understood; but, as she remembered the Coyote, the scene in the Shiners' Gap stood out distinct. She recalled the old negro's words about the two men; the devilish plot she heard Kyle Hardy outline to Miles, to lie away two human lives; and she saw again his evil face, hate-hungry, as he aimed his pistol at the colonel's heart.

But, strive as she might, Juny could not recall the few chance words she had overheard about the stolen papers. Memory refused her all clue as to what *they* were.

But the strange reappearance of the two men at this time; their continued plotting against the only parent she had ever known; their still more strange appearance, that day, under his very roof; all these whirled through her brain and defied reasonable conjecture.

But above all, Tip Miles' intimacy with her adopted aunt defied belief! Think of what she would, that scene rose again before her; and the words, "Shame! Disgrace! Connection!" echoed in Mrs. Browne's heart-broken tones.

What *could* it mean? What possible bond could bind the great social leader to the low gambler from the purlieus of



society? But suddenly—in the new light turned on by Lili's hinted story—an awful suggestion flashed before the girl. But her strong common sense at once dismissed it; and her woman's intuition scouted such absurdity as a possible love affair with such a man as Tip Miles! And that last refuge of woman's logic reft from her, Juny felt the helplessness of conjecture and bravely turned back to the real present.

Gus was still sitting moodily as she had left her; the note lying at her feet and her manicured finger tips beating tattoo on the table. Juny moved softly to her, sat on the arm of the tufted chair, and, passing her arm about the other girl, pressed her cheek against hers.

"Oh! Gus! Isn't it too dreadful?" she said, with a bitter little shiver.

"I should say so!" Gus answered angrily, spurning the little note with the toe of her bronze slipper. "To think of it! And the man a common gambler!"

"That makes little difference. It would be just as dreadful for the woman—whatever he might be."

Gus broke from the encircling arm and twisted round to stare at Juny's face with wondering eyes.

"*You* say that! Oh! Juny, how *can* you?" she cried half hysterically.

"Because I mean it, dear," Juny answered stoutly, but not ungently. "You know how I have been raised—and I fear I am the wild girl still. But it seems to me that the woman's sin is no less, because the man is greater sinner still. Oh! Gus, *how* my heart went out to that poor, suffering, repentant girl!"

"Oh! Bother the girl! I thought you were speaking of *that*." And again the bronze slipper spurned the note on the floor. "But you *were* right, Juny! So was I! Mamma shall know that my intuitions are as good as hers, when I say people are not crimp!"



"Yes ; I was right, unhappily," Juny answered. "I never saw that ruffian but once ; that dreadful night when they tried to murder dad and Will ; but yesterday I could not believe my memory was true. Oh ! Gus, what sort of thing is this society you all prize so, when nameless robbers can creep into it ; when their pals and partners come familiarly to this very —— "

She stopped herself quickly. The other girl stared, surprised at the homily from such a source.

"Oh, society is crimp enough," she answered wearily. "It's what a —— what God made it, I suppose. But it *does* seem horrid that people should let me meet such a man at their houses ; and subject us both to the visit of that shameless creature ——"

"Oh, Gus ! Don't call her *that* ! Poor thing ! My heart goes out to her now ! With her beauty and pride and gentleness, there must be some excuse that you and I, thank God ! can not understand. She is so young still."

"She let the man deceive her, all the same," Gus retorted, rather warmly.

"She said she was a child ! Can you judge her so harshly, when he deceived you and Aunt Browne and all society ? "

"I don't care !" Gus retorted, half sobbing. "It *was* shameful of her to come here ! "

"Why, Gus ! how *can* you ? " reproached the other girl. "Think what a sacrifice of pride it must have been. And she came to save you ! "

"I don't care !" Gus repeated. "And besides, she's *a negro* ! "

"She is *not* !" Juny retorted warmly.

"She said so herself !" Gus answered, putting her lace handkerchief to her eyes.

"She said that in defense of her terrible mistake," Juny answered warmly. "With her grace and gentleness ; with



that face and those hands, she is *no* negro ! Some far-off taint of blood may be there ; but, Gus, *she's a lady !* ”

“ You ought to be ashamed ! ” Gus answered angrily. “ But I forgot how you were raised. ”

A hot flush rose to the girl's face and a hot answer trembled on her lips. But she only said coldly :

“ I have not forgotten ! I remember every day that I was an outcast, like that poor woman you condemn. Did I forget it, I could never thank dad enough ; never thank God enough, for giving him to me ; for I might have been as she is ! Yes ; my earliest friend, my best friend, was a negro ! And, different as he is from her, I respect his goodness and I love him still. ”

Gus rose with trembling lips and reddened cheeks ; hot little sobs shaking the laces over her shapely bust. It was plain that she—as her ex-lover was about that time confiding to Mr. Tip Miles about himself—“ had nerves. ”

“ Don't be angry, Gus, ” Juny said more gently. “ You know I do not understand society ways ; but I only spoke the truth. ”

“ It isn't crimp to—to speak the truth ! ” Gus sobbed angrily, “ when it's not—pleasant ! ” and the daughter of her mother swept from the room, still racked by the little sobs ; and crossing to the library, hid her face on the writing table for that best feminine solace, “ a good cry. ”

But the storm was soon over, leaving only heat lightning in the eyes and reminiscent luridity upon the cheeks. Recurrent anger dried the tears, and, biting her pretty lips, the society girl forgot the injured miss and wrote rapidly upon Tiffany's best linen note. Then she sealed the missive and rang the bell.

“ Wash, take this note at once to the Orphic Club, ” she said to the old negro, as he answered the summons. “ Only leave it. There's no answer. ” Then recrossing to the draw-



ing-room, she found Juny pacing the floor in restless thought. Going to her, Gus passed her arm around the girl's waist and walked with her a moment in silence. Then she said :

"I was hateful, ugly, just now, Juny, dear. I know I was not one bit crimp. But I was so miserable, so ashamed of all this wretched affair !"

"That's all right," Juny answered frankly. "I don't mind one bit, Gus. I never had a lover ; but I guess I'd feel as you did, if I ever had an unworthy one. But, dear, there are more serious things than that about this man ——"

Again Juny stopped herself abruptly. Should she trust Gus and speak of the load that was weighing on her young heart? Will knew the men were here ; from what he had said as they left the dinner table, he even seemed to know of the Coyote's visits. And Will had warned her not to breathe a word. He was at work to foil these men, and she had perfect faith in his courage and discretion. A chance word might undo all his plans, and that thought sealed her lips as she began to speak.

Fortunately, Gus misunderstood the words she heard, for she answered slowly :

"Yes, I know there are. The *fact* is bad enough ; but if it should get out in society. Oh ! heavens, it would *kill* me ! I'll not even mention it to Will."

"No ; do not mention it to *him* —— yet," Juny assented.

"Nor to mamma, of course. She'd have conniptions ! But it would be crimp to let her see the difference between her Monte Cristo and Michael Angelo ! And, oh ! Juny, if *he* should ever hear it !"

"He never need hear it, Gus. As for Aunt Browne—— never breathe it to her. Burn that note without reply."

"Oh ! no ! The *reply* has gone already ! And such a reply ! Juny, I just took his skin off !"



Juny stared at the other girl in silence a moment. Then she said calmly :

“ Perhaps you know best, Gus. *I* should not have written ; but then, perhaps, it is —— conventional.”

The cuckoo clock on the mantel cooed out ten times.

“ Good gracious ! Ten o’clock ! Let’s go to bed, Juny,” cried Gus, quickly oblivious of the trouble about her. “ I shall look like a witch for the excursion to-morrow ! ”





## CHAPTER XX.

## A CLUE PERHAPS.

Juny looked after Gus' retreating figure with mixed emotions. Pity for a really fine nature in danger of utter ruin from conventions—though perhaps scarce analyzed by the girl herself—was one of the strongest. But paramount was the unuttered thankfulness, that so far she had escaped that contact with society which seemed to smother feeling under fixed rules and to indurate self.

But fast succeeding—and swallowing, as Aaron's rod, all the rest—recurred the question: What *were* these men to her and hers? Why had the older insisted so feelingly on speaking to her? What hold could he have upon her dad; worse, upon dad's sister?

Pacing the grand drawing-room, Juny thought all this; longing to see Will, and, if nothing more, explain the visit of the Octoroon and her discovery of Hardy's *alias*. At last, excited and feverish, she passed the street door, standing upon the broad stoop to inhale the fresh night air. But still reverie dominated her brain; and it was with a start that she saw a boy stop, examine the house critically and then run up the steps.

"This is Cap'n Wilmot Browne's house, hain't it?" cried Larry Miggs, addressing the figure dark in shadow. But, as the girl moved into the glare of hall gas, the Leading Man gave his most magnificent wave to the crownless hat. "Hi prays ten thousing pardings, mos' grayshus lady! Hi didn't know it wus *you*, yer kin specerlate! But see; 'I crook the pignut hinges o' mer knee, that fawns may foller farming'!"



"What on earth are you talking about?" Juny asked, half uneasy, half in amusement. "If you can't speak English, I'll call one of the gentlemen."

"Kerect, miss," Larry replied. "Please do, if ary on 'em happens to be Cap'n Wilmut Browne!" And he added, *sotto voce*: "My eye! *Ain't* she a corker!"

"Captain Browne is out," Juny began; then recalling Will's warning, she added quickly: "You have a message for him? I was waiting for it!"

"*You!* 'Tis strange; 'tis passing strangers!" Mr. Miggs answered. "Did he *know* the old 'un would send th' note?"

"How else could I be waiting to receive it for him?" was the answer Juny made, with a great lump in her throat and an inward petition to the Recording Angel to blot that little white one from the record.

"Agin' I axes yer parding!" Larry said, with another stare into the remembered magnificence of that hallway. "But it *does* look like as the old 'un has swell up frends fur a chip o' his stripe! *You* know him?"

Into Juny's brain flashed Miles' visit of that morning; and in an instant she was again "the shiners' gal," with every faculty alert.

"Know the old 'un?" she repeated easily. "What! That funny little man with the green patch over his eye?"

"Kerect, miss! *You're* engaged!" Larry rejoined, with a grin. "Then this yere note's frum *him* ter Cap'n Wilmut Browne; promp' derliv'ry an' postidge ter collec'—yer may twitter!"

"You mean that I am to pay you?" Juny asked, with a sense of impending surprises, as she seized the dingy-brown envelope.

"That's 'bout ther size of it, miss, yer may estermate!" Master Miggs answered. "Th' old 'un said the note was



worth a fiver ter th' Cap'n. *Sa-ay!* I'll throw in ten tickets ter th' benefit besides!"

Juny opened her porte-monnaie, gave the boy a gold piece, and entered the house in haste. The letter literally burned her, in impatience to know its contents, for it seemed plain that some clue to the mystery around them was hidden in it.

Master Miggs stood a moment, hat in hand and staring at the bronzed door.

"By Junior Brutal Boot!" he soliloquized. "*She is a corker! Wot hyes! wot harms! and wot a neck! Yer may sinkterlate! but she's built from the ground up! An' this yere leetle yaller feller, he stans fur fifty tickets 'at one fell swap!*' Gimini Jones! But m' luck's comin': 'Th' stars has said it an' th' voice of m' own profit and in dormitory soul can fin' th' shinin' silver'!"

Then running down the steps, Larry turned the corner, whistled shrill and cried to the Pete thus summoned from the vasty deeps of some neighboring area:

"Show me th' Treasury, Pete! Show her up quick! Look a' *this!* The wally o' fifty tickets for one small run! Hit's a reg'lar Hedwin Boot run!"

Then, locking arms, the two innocent lambs of the slums started homeward, on a trot. Suddenly Larry pulled up abruptly.

"Stag that end-man!" he cried, pointing to Wash Clay, stalking pompously under an opposite lamp. "I knows *him*; an' he's a treat, *he is!* *Sa-ay!* Otheller!" he added, crossing; "Wot's yer game? Ye're out late, hain't ye?"

"Lor' bress me!" cried Wash, disgusted. "Ef yere 'ent da' onplesunt boy agin! Wa' yo want, boy? Wa' yo want 'long o' me?" Suddenly his face lit, under flash of an idea. "Jesso, boy, jesso! Wha' way yo' gwine, enyhow?"

"Straight that-a-way," Larry replied, pointing.



"An' does yo kno' were de Orfic Club hous am situated?" Wash asked.

"Wot! That 'ere brass-mounted hotel, were de swells eats an' drinks an' gambles, but never takes dere wives? Bet yer boots!"

"Tek dis leetle letter strait dar!" Wash said, "an' I'll gib yo' a quarter, sho's yo' born! Dere ain't no anser; jes lebe de note an' git; yo' heah me?"

"Percisely! I hain't deefe," Larry rejoined, pocketing the fee; and the trio separated in diverse ways.

Juny, standing in the hall, read and reread the scrawled address on the envelope. Then she rushed to the drop light and looked through it, against the blaze. It was a thin, brown envelope, evidently with no enclosure; only a few faint lines of writing. Nothing gave her any clue to the contents; but she could not lay the missive aside.

What *could* it contain? Possibly the solution of all the mystery. Possibly—and she shivered at recollection of their devilish ingenuity in evil—some new trick to lure Will, or her dad, into peril.

Twenty times she turned to the window, as rapid steps approached the house, but ever passed beyond. Three times the little carved cuckoo had flapped his wooden wings and sounded once; and now he cooed eleven times. Yet, no sign of Will; and the girl, putting the note in her bosom, reluctantly passed up the stairs.

Tapping at Colonel Baylor's door, she responded to his cheery "Come in, darling!" with assumed gayety; berating his late hours and ordering him to bed. He laughed and pointed to piles of papers on the table.

"Your aunt insists on full explanation of her stewardship, before we go to Browne Beach to-morrow," he said, smiling. "Really, the place is hardly worth the taxes to me, save for a memory that makes it priceless; a memory



that was all I had in this world, till God sent *you* to me, Juny, *my daughter!*”

Drawing her to his knee, the old soldier put his hands upon her shining hair, with all a mother's tenderness; and they talked long and fondly.

“But, dad, darling, you must go to bed now!” the girl said at last. “For once *you* shall disobey Aunt Browne; and Gus has lectured *me* asleep about society!”

Then, as he pushed aside his papers, she added:

“Kiss me and give me your blessing, dad! For, oh! I *do* love you *so* dearly.”

And, with his blessing, she went to her own room. Still fevered with anxiety, she slipped on a light wrapper, threw herself into a rocking-chair; and, through the door ajar, watched impatiently for Will.

One hour passed; another, and her watch told her that the time was passed when she might hope to see him that night.

Then, prepared for bed, Juny sunk upon her knees. Long and fervently she prayed to the Father of the orphan, that He might guide her and protect from hidden dangers those dearest to her.

And then, through her pure appeal to the great Mercy Seat, went up the virginal petition for forgiveness and nepenthe to that suffering sinner, who had brought her burthen to them that night.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## OFF THE TRACK.

Captain Beagle was not too busy that afternoon to let his thoughts sometimes revert to the Octoroon, whose beauty and whose troubles had taken such hold upon his usually tough sympathies.

Had the fablist who wrote of "The Lion in Love" studied the detective species, we might have had a version of "the detective in spoons;" showing the all-pervadence of that tender passion, which not even official pachyderms may resist.

And, as night fell and Beagle lit the gas, he drew out letters from the New Orleans chief, giving Hardy's antecedents and, incidentally, full details of Lili's birth. A strange smile hovered over the thief-taker's face, as he muttered:

"I really believe it's a case of spoons! I certainly can't get that woman's eyes out of my mind; and, by George! what a figure she has! It's a cursed shame that brute has blinded the poor child so long; and treating her so, too. Half the time nothing to eat in the house, while my lord swells in society and has his wine at the club! Well, I've opened her eyes, at last; but *how* am I to give her the promised proof? But, I may click the bracelets on Mr. Hardy to-morrow night, and his pal walks into the net to help me!"

He sat down to write again, as Carson tapped at the door and handed in a card.

"McTavish! I sent him on an eighteen-hour shadow! Send him in!" exclaimed the chief, adding as the clerical-



looking man entered, "What have you done with your man?"

"Lost him!" McTavish answered, blunt but downcast.

"How?" The one word meant volumes.

"He went straight to his room at the hotel, to sleep; a seven-o'clock call. I engaged the connecting room. There was no transom; the key on his side. There was no sound; but when the call-boy came—and I swear he had never opened his door—the bird had flown!"

"Um! This is apt to help your promotion! You can go!"

Captain Beagle wrote until after nine o'clock. Then he closed his office and strolled slowly homeward, passing Hardy's house—on both sides of the street—before he let himself into his own. On his private desk lay several papers; but, without noting them, he passed to the window and again stared thoughtfully at the gambler's residence.

There was clatter of hoofs on the cobbles; the brougham passed and stopped; and, as he leaned from the window, the detective thought he saw, in the dim light, two figures descend from it. Gliding into the street, he stood in the shadow as the vehicle slowly turned and came toward him. Then he stepped out and walked along by it with the low words: "Hist! Barney; which way?"

"It warn't him, this toime; thim two wimmin," replied the driver from his seat. "Lexin'tun avenoo; thot house were *he* goes!"

"Did they go in?"

"Th' maddum wint insoide an' sthaid a-wile. Thin she coom oot a-cryin'; an' th' ole 'ooman an' she had it all th' way hoom!"

"All right, Barney!" And Captain Beagle, turning into his own house, muttered: "Phew! She's prompt! But she won't need the proof from *me*, now!"



Then he glanced over the notes left in his absence. Reading Wilmot Browne's, he pushed the others aside, reread it carefully ; then quickly opened the bureau in the room.

"Darn it ! That's a puzzler ! Browne shadowing one of my men himself, and tumbling to changed time before I did ! By Jove ! If they've separated before I can nab those papers, I'll lose a fat fee ! Wonder if old Miles wrote that note *after* he saw me ! Curse McTavish ! If he'd half an eye, I should have the job done by this time !"

While so speaking, the detective rapidly selected from the bureau a reddish wig and beard, a slouch hat and a loose spring ulster ; which he deftly put on, to utter change of his appearance. Then he slipped a shining pair of light handcuffs and a small, but murderous-looking, "billy" into his pocket ; tried the chambers of his revolver and opened the front door.

"Hunter !" called a quiet voice from above. "Going again ?"

"Yes, mammy !" the man answered respectfully.

"Back soon ?"

"Can't tell. Put out lights. Good night, mammy ;" and the thief-taker started for Tompkins Square, as though in the last lap of a free-for-all match for a big purse.

Twice, as he strode along, he slipped out his watch and sounded the repeater. It was quarter to ten, before he had reached Tompkins Square ; and five minutes more before he saw Will Browne, stalking moodily in the shadow opposite the pawn-shop, with eyes fastened on the feebly-shining Lombard coat-of-arms. But he drew back into deeper shadow, as Beagle crossed the street toward him.

"All right ! I'm Beagle," the latter whispered.

"Well, you've waited long enough," Will whispered back wrathfully. "What's this disguise ?"



"Had interview with Miles; musn't know me should we meet. Is *he* there?"

"Both went in about nine. Why the devil ——"

"Stick to business," Beagle interrupted. "Got your note ten minutes ago. What do you know?"

"Nothing!" Will replied shortly. "I pay *you*, to know. They are both in the house; but the Jew would not let me put my nose in."

"That's proper; he's all right," Beagle answered. "But you *are* a keener! Watch close for the black fellow till I get back."

He crossed the street again and, to Browne's surprise, disappeared into the narrow, fétid alley beside the shop.

"*Ss-t-tt!* Lay low, Isaac!" the detective whispered, as he emerged from the alley into the open space; and the old man moved noiselessly from the window and crept toward him.

"Have they changed any papers yet?" Beagle whispered.

"Nein; dey haf gwarrel lout, den dey mek frents. Dey haf shanged no babers yed. Dot olt man schwere he none haf; und dot oder von, he offer '*tousan* 'toller! Und he yet haf schwere dem babers can not he geefe undil domerrer at drei o'glock!"

"Did he say *where*?" Beagle asked quickly.

"Yah; ein fahrm haus. Und den tey spheak off ein yunger ——"

"So! A young woman who lives with Hardy?"

"Nein. Ein schile dot he many years so long ——"

"Never mind that. I'm after papers, not kids, now," the detective interrupted. "You're sure Miles gave none?"

"Nein! Always I know vereof I spheak!"

"And he promised them to-morrow?"

"Yaw! I voot pet your life off *dot!*"



The detective hesitated, groped his way back toward the street, then turned back to the narrow, reeking yard and stood by the pawnbroker, where the thin shaft of light shone through the closed shutter.

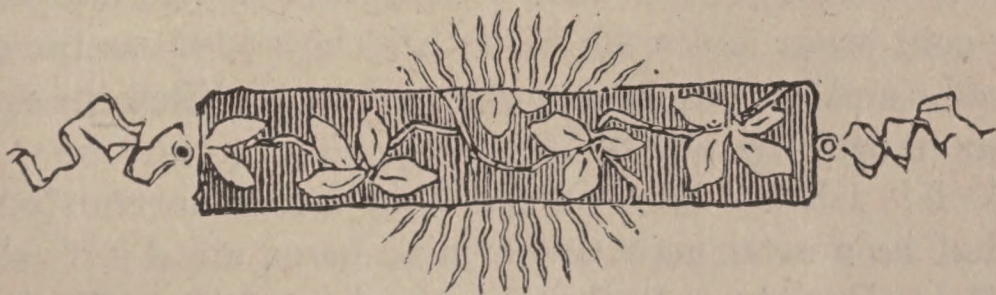
To his first glance, the room seemed empty. Had the prey escaped while he had talked?

Next instant his quick eyes took in the facts. Hardy had gone; Miles lay motionless, with head resting on limp arms upon the table.

"Watch! Don't lose this one!" he whispered to Isaac; then made all possible speed toward the street.

Browne was not in sight; no response came to his low whistle; and Captain Hunter Beagle profanely remarked:

"*Well!* Damn me! But here's a go!"





## CHAPTER XXII.

## DOCTOR AND PATIENT.

Beagle tried the front door; it yielded to his touch. Slipping his "billy" over his wrist, and raising his bull's eye over his head, he passed the dark shop and stood by the sleeping Miles. The man had shown himself no mean antagonist; and he doubted if he were drunk, or "playing 'possum."

"He hasn't McTavish to deal with now," thought the veteran thief-taker. "If he slips *me*, he's the first one. He ain't drunk; he'd breathe louder!" Then, suddenly suspicious, he peered under the table and on Miles' clothes, for signs of blood, adding: "No marks on him; it can't be murder. Oho! *That's* the game!" He raised the half-empty glass, gave a long sniff and smiled. "Drugged! Well, he's a bigger fool than I thought! Here, Isaac! Get some cold water and wash his face!" he added, as the other entered; and he felt Miles' pulse and coolly lifted his eyelids and examined the pupils.

"Vell! Ish he det?" Schonstein asked nervously. "I vill haf no murter mate under mine haus, ain'd it?"

"He's all right. Rather heavy dose, but he'll sleep it off," Beagle answered, peering into the empty grate and inverting the cracked mantel-vase. "Wonder if he left the bottle?"

Then he shook the glaring lithograph, hanging over the fire-place; and down dropped an ounce phial, still half full of dark fluid. Beagle again glanced at the tumbler and added:



"You're safe from the coroner's visit this time, Isaac. He hasn't enough to hurt. That's right; souse him well!"

And Mr. Schonstein obeyed; dipping a peculiarly dirty handkerchief into the diminutive water cooler, and slopping the sleeper's florid face.

Again the detective felt his pulse, listened to the strong beat of his heart, and said:

"He'll wake soon and want to get out at once. Does he understand German? No? Then tell him I am the German doctor you sent for when he fainted. Meantime, I'll diagnose his case."

So saying, Captain Beagle examined Miles' pockets quite as carefully—and equally as resultlessly—as Hardy had done.

"It's my belief," he remarked to himself, as he returned the papers carefully—"that this is the slickest gent I've had my claws on this many a year! Whatever his game, if he don't play it to the queen's taste, then I don't know the sort of stuff that he has spoiled for a boss detective! If I don't send him up for life, I think I'll offer him that partnership he lost for McTavish. *That*"—he nodded toward the half-empty glass—"is the only weak play he's made since I've shadowed him. Hello! He's waking. Now, stuff him, Ikey, and jabber at me in German! *Sure* he don't understand?"

"Don'd I haf tole you nein! Not I know vereof I spheak, ain'd id?" replied the other. "Aha! Now you vos feel't bedder, mein tear!"

This last to Miles, who stretched himself, opened weary eyes and stared about him stupidly, as Beagle leaned over and felt his pulse. To him Schonstein rattled off a sentence in German, adding to Miles:

"Ein tochter for you, mein tear! You vos fainted from der heat, don'd id?"



"Fainted, the devil!" Miles sat bolt upright. "I never fainted in my life! But I do feel rather groggy," he added, attempting to rise. "I want some water; no—guess this'll do better!"

He reached for the half-emptied liquor glass, but Schonstein quickly seized it and screamed:

"Nein! nein! Dose vos dem druks he geefe you!"

"Yah! dot ish so!" Beagle cried quickly. "Druks vot I myself haf geefe you; I myself!" But the heel he brought down on Mr. Schonstein's bunion caused that indiscreet assistant to yell with pain.

Miles looked from one to the other, seized the glass and sniffed at it critically. Then he said, with a grim smile:

"Oh! You did? You yourselves! Well, then I reckon you *borrowed* the flask!"

And as he glanced at the cheap Yankee clock, the grim smile broadened into a cunning leer and he muttered to himself:

"Tip, your head *was* level to leave 'em! So, the darned fool had his trouble for nothing, after all!"

"Ant you ish feel mooch bedder now, is he not?" the brevet doctor queried.

"Yes; I'm all right, if I get out of this into the air." But he reeled, as he tried to walk, and Beagle took his arm.

"I veel valk mit you somewheres," he said. "You leefe nod far also, ees it?"

"The Leake House, Third avenue," Miles replied, with a yawn. "Guess you'd better call a cab when we get into the street."

"So! Ant I shall go mid you, nein?" Doctor Beagle answered; and finding a Tompkins Square night-liner, the pair were bumped to the hotel.

"Hello! Mr. Miles," cried the genial clerk. "You missed your call this evening?"



"I walked out and forgot to notify you," Tip answered. "I have the key. Think I'll go up now. I'm not well."

"And this gentleman with you?" the clerk asked.

"So! I veel go also ant asseest, nein?" Beagle replied quickly. "Mynheer vos a leedle not vell; ant to me seems shoot have some draught composing before sleep he shall, peerhaps!"

"It's not necessary. I'm all right now," Miles said.

"Ach! Mynheer little heemself can dell!" Beagle persisted; and Miles, too sleepy to argue, took his proffered arm and went to his room.

He was assisted to bed; the doctor felt his pulse, watched his closed eyes; then rang the bell, giving the boy who answered it a scribbled slip:

"Give that to the clerk!" he said in a tone of authority; and Miles—though half-asleep—was struck by the absence of accent, and by something vaguely familiar in the voice. But, too weary to think, he fell into profound sleep.

How long after, he knew not; but suddenly Miles lay wide awake, the opiate wholly slept off, and every sense acutely active in the reaction. Like a flash—ere yet his eyes were well opened—the events of the evening came back; his conference with Hardy; the proffered brandy; his heavy sleep; the German doctor!

And there, in the next room, with the door between ajar, the doctor prepared for bed, in the full light of the gas!

Trained in that rough school where man's life was often the forfeit for one misstep, Tip Miles kept his body perfectly still, his mind acutely active. His own room was dark; and twice "the doctor" moved softly to the door, looked in and listened. And twice Tip Miles closed his eyes, breathing the deep, regular breath of heavy sleep.

Then the other turned to the bureau—behind the door, but plainly visible through the crack—and, to his not great



surprise, Tip Miles saw him coolly behead himself; remove wig and beard and confront the smooth face of Hunter Beagle in the mirror.

Moving noiselessly about, the detective placed the disguise in his hat; laid his revolver and the shining handcuffs on a chair; folded his clothes neatly over its back, and drew it between his bedside and the door, lest the latter might slam from a draft. Then he turned the gas very low, and Miles heard him slip into the bed, just beyond range of his vision.

Lying there, with every faculty alert, but every muscle still, the old river-sharp mapped out his own plan by the other's actions.

That he had been shadowed by this detective twice that day was plain. That he had been so for months—from hints dropped in their afternoon's talk—was probable; but for what cause, Miles reasoned in vain, save that Beagle's reference to Kyle Hardy, coupled with his presence at Schonstein's, connected the Coyote with it. Was Hardy playing double, and setting some cunning trap for him? Impossible that the Coyote would dare to hunt in couples with this known detective; yet, here was the latter, disguised and on his track.

Still tangling this mental puzzle, Miles heard the clock strike one; then two; and now it chimed out three. And all those two hours Beagle had slept; lightly at first, with fitful breath and occasional start; heavily now, as testified by snoring, regular and deep, if not loud.

Little by little Miles edged himself from his bed, moving noiselessly to his own door and passing his hand over the knob. The key was gone!

Then, quietly as a ghost, he glided to the next room and stood by the sleeper's bed. Noiselessly and slowly he secured the pistol; then the hand-cuffs, testing their springs, to see that they would snap easily.



Beagle was lying prone upon his back, his left arm across his breast, his right easy at his side.

Without perceptible movement—with the deft skill of a juggler—Miles slipped the bracelet over the sleeper's right wrist; and, ere its snap had half roused Beagle, his right hand had been seized with iron grip, jerked down to the left, and the hand-cuff snapped upon that also!

Bolt upright sat the manacled detective, yet only half awake; but the click of a pistol-lock brought him well out of sleep, as he felt its cold muzzle on his brow.

"Lie still! If you move, I shoot!" Miles said softly.

"What the devil do you mean?" cried the captured capturer, more in amaze than fear. "Are you going to murder me?"

"That depends! I will, if you open your mouth again!" Miles answered candidly. And, so speaking, he seized the upper sheet, tearing it down the middle; again tearing the half. Then he said shortly: "Sit up!"

Beagle lay doggedly still; deep mortification and impotent rage struggling for mastery in him. But Miles did not pause.

"Sit up!" he repeated. "Else, say your prayers!"

Beagle rose slowly and cautiously, drawing his hands up high on his breast, as his feet swung to the floor.

"Drop your hands! That's better," Miles said in a whisper. "Those cuffs are light; but the dodge is too old to rap me with 'em. Turn your back and move lively, too!"

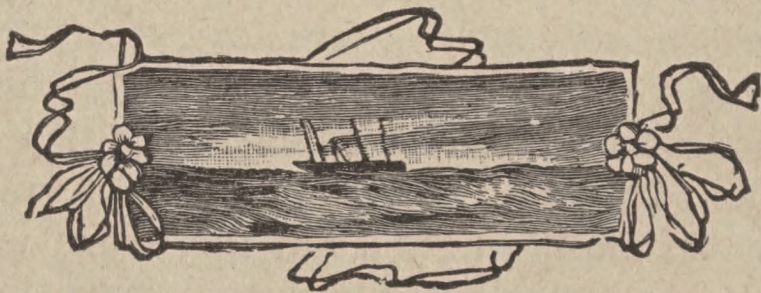
There was no recourse. As Beagle sullenly obeyed, Miles deftly knotted the heavy cloth strip through his elbows; passed the long end round his ankle and struck him under the knee. As the leg bent, he bore on the bandage; and, with a grunt of rage, Beagle rolled heavily on the bed, bound *à la* Rarey. Next moment, the other leg was tied, as Miles said:



“ You force me to this yourself ; coming disguised to my room and locking me in. I’m on a piece of detective work, bigger than *yours* with me possibly can be. I went to you square, to take you in. You lied and shadowed me ! I don’t know *how* you’re dangerous ; but you are, and by the ’Tarnal Jackpot ! I’ll draw your teeth ! ”

Swiftly, as he spoke, Miles gagged securely the bound detective ; closed the shutter and pulled down the shade. Then he took the folded clothes of his prisoner ; locked the connecting door ; and, putting the key in Beagle’s pocket, laid the entire wardrobe far away under his own mattress.

Then, hastily dressing himself and pocketing the revolver, Miles stepped once more upon the flat roof, crossed the angle and was soon out in the street.





## CHAPTER XXIII.

## A GIDDY GAME OF DRAW.

The stained glass windows of the Orphic Club were ablaze with light, and through them and the frequent opening door, showed glimpses of "revelry by night." The rooms were full, and the hum of conversation was cut by the pop of "extra dry" and the distance-mellowed click of billiard balls. And toward this lively scene Kyle Hardy strode from the pawnshop, with Wilmot Browne behind him.

On the latter the detective fever now burned hotly; and, independent of the deep personal interest in the chase, he followed it with the same eager pertinacity which had borne him along the trail of the "copper faces" over many a western prairie.

But in his heart burned hot wrath against Beagle, whom he relegated to the care of the lost angels and believed to be the most fraudulent pretense ever imposed upon the detective system.

For, when Hardy had left the pawn-shop, Beagle was invisible; and, when he did reappear, Hardy and Browne had vanished like twin bubbles.

And Hardy, too, raged inwardly. He had fully counted on getting back his papers, by force or by trick; but the change in Miles made him fear that his supposed soft old pal had been "playing it on him" all the while; and even now might be trying some dangerous trick. Then the sudden return of Baylor and the revelation about Juny added to his uneasiness; for he must file his papers at Washington, pocket his reward and disappear into another *alias* without a day's delay.



Gus Browne, too, was a prime factor in his thoughts. For, added to other dangers, he was now certain it was Juny he had seen that day, and he felt the girl had recognized him as well. But the giddy, pretty and well-bred woman, of whom he had signally failed his usual easy conquest, piqued his vanity, while his mood somewhat softened.

Would she answer his note? Women are always puzzles; and perhaps the thought that she was really to lose him might pique her into a clandestine meeting, outside those dangerous doors! Then ——

Busily thinking, the gambler entered the Orphic door, and was greeted with a shower of salutations.

"Thought you had grown virtuous and there would be no more cakes and ale," drawled young Upton Dyke, who led the German of his set.

"Perhaps he has been drilling in General Cupid's tactics," said Major Van Borst ironically, as he removed his duster and handed his satchel to the boy.

"Lucky in love; unlucky at cards;" quoted old Boozler, the coolest head at cribbage in the club. "Will you defy the proverb 'for his nob,' de la Plata?"

"Or, sit in at draw with *our* party?" put in Cutter Goldy, the boldest "raiser" of the Orphic's many. "We have promised Courtenay Carroll, here, to lift off the limit to-night; and let him recoup, if he can!"

"Oh, yes! Sit in with us," Courtenay Carroll urged. "You always make the game interesting ——"

"For somebody else!" Hardy finished, with the strange smile that always showed his white teeth. And he spoke truth; for the professional had purposely lost in the general games, reserving his force for the heavier players, in strictly private rooms. But, of late, none of these had offered; and to-night he was desperate. He had not a dollar in the world; was in sore need of it to further his several schemes;



and the set of men urging him could afford to lose their thousands and laugh.

"Well, anyway, Carroll, I'll be your guardian angel," he answered; adding *sotto voce* to Goldy: "Club rules, I presume? Settle at twelve to-morrow?"

"If you prefer," Goldy answered carelessly, "you can divide. I have enough in my pocket for both."

"I do prefer," Hardy replied quietly. "Some of them are almost strangers. Can you spare—five hundred?"

"Readily; or double that," was the ready response. "I knew Courtenay wanted blood, so I came plethoric."

"Better make it the thousand, then," Hardy answered carelessly; and, sitting at the desk, he wrote an order on the Brazilian Legation, at Washington, for that amount.

"Why, *that* is not necessary," Goldy said, following him. "Just hand it to me to-morrow."

Again Hardy's smile disclosed his teeth.

"*C'est indifférent!*" he said. "Better take it, now 'tis written. Men sometimes die over night." And carelessly stuffing the roll of bills in his pocket, Hardy was following the other men to the stairs, when the doorman advanced and handed him a note.

He glanced at the well-known writing and with "Pardon, one moment," to the others, stepped back to the table and tore it open; his face clouding as he noted the absence of the invariably apparent crest of the Baylor Brownes.

Undated and unsigned, the page contained only the words:

"Insolence is not surprising from a person who borrows his name; but, if Kyle Hardy repeats his, the police will be notified."

The man read the lines slowly, twice; a dingy flush creeping into his hardened face.

"So you know me, my fine lady!" he muttered. "This must be Juny's work! Well, *that* game is played! To-



morrow I'll deal for a new one, Gus! And then for fresh fields and other game!"

He crushed the note in his fiercely-clenched hand; but, with smiling face, followed his party to the card room. Already nimble waiters had placed cards and many-colored chips upon the ample round table; luxurious leathern chairs were drawn around it; and from two ample wine-coolers, long necks of champagne bottles projected beyond their pillows of ice. Flaring gas was tempered soft by opal-tinted globes; and admirable works of Bouguereau, de Neuville and Gérôme, looked down upon "the pictures in little" of many a king and queen.

Gilded vice welcomed her votaries with most alluring mien; and soon—the first courtesy passes of the *duel à la mort* being over—all were so immersed in it as to be oblivious to aught else, especially to the passage of time.

Midnight had come and gone; the "wee sma' hours" began to grow larger; and still the gamesters anted, raised, bluffed and called, with avidity only freshened by the hundreds that changed hands on every deal.

"By jove, colonel!" cried Upton Dyke, as Courtenay Carroll beat Hardy's three aces with a flush. "The jade, fortune, *has* set her face against you to-night!"

"He must have been awfully 'lucky in love' to-day," Goldy said, dealing the cards.

The dark brow of the gambler grew darker still at the chance thrust; but he smiled his toothsome smile, as he answered:

"It *is* a long lane; but it *may* turn. You know how my luck shifts." But almost as he spoke, he lost the next hand, and bought another stack of chips with the last tenth of Goldy's thousand.

"By jove, colonel!" Carroll exclaimed, "that *is* rough! Why, if the proverb about love and cards holds true, you



must have victims to your chariot's tail by the score!" Courtenay Carroll was in great luck; and, of course, in great good humor.

"Both are equally liable to change," Hardy answered; this time without his smile. "It is my age, this deal. Will you drink to the change, Mr. Carroll?"

"With greatest pleasure! Alphonse, some wine!" Carroll cried, as he sat on Hardy's left hand.

"No; not for me!" the latter interrupted. "Another *petit verre* of that brandy, Alphonse!"

Hardy reached over to touch glasses.

Somehow, his hand shook, and a few drops of the fiery Cognac were spilled, *in front of Carroll*.

"Pardon my awkwardness!" Hardy exclaimed. "Here! quick! Alphonse." But, even before the words were out, the nimble waiter had dropped his napkin on the fluid; rubbing the polished surface dry with vigorous arm.

The deal was made. It was a big Jackpot, Hardy holding the age; and Carroll, on his left, opened it. The next man passed out, and Goldy, on Hardy's right, raised a hundred. The latter leaned back in his chair, studying his cards; but sat up quickly as Carroll fanned *his* out, inclined toward him. One flash of his practiced eye into the polished mahogany showed Hardy the reflection of three aces!

"Well, I believe—I'll see it!" the gambler said.

Carroll promptly raised five hundred, and Goldy looked keenly at him as he drawled:

"I believe you're loaded for bear, Court, but I'll stand it! That pot is worth fifteen hundred now!"

Then, a looker-on behind Hardy's chair—had such barbarism been permitted in Orphic private rooms—had seen a remarkable play. He held only two small diamonds, the nine and ten of spades and the queen of hearts. But he said quietly:



"*You* drank to my luck, Mr. Carroll; so, I'll stay, too, and raise you—one thousand more!"

"Who's 'loaded for bear' now!" Carroll cried, with a rather nervous laugh. "But I'll see it, once!"

"I'm on velvet enough to risk it, too; I stay!" Goldy said. "But I never *will* be a poker player! I *can't* let a big pot go!" He took up the pack to deal.

"By Luck! The pot's worth the risk!" cried Hardy. "I'll break a *big* hand to try for a *bigger*! One card!" And he flirled the *queen of hearts*, face upward, into the Jackpot. He drew the—*deuce of clubs*!

"Thanks for your information! I *have* seen fours played that way," Carroll said rather nervously. "Give me all I can get, Goldy!" And he discarded two cards.

"I am satisfied with these," the latter said, laying down the pack without dealing to himself.

Carroll lifted the two cards separately; and Hardy, apparently intent upon his own hand, caught in the mirrored table the reflection of—the fourth ace!

There was a brief pause; each man studying his cards, and the two players, "not in," watching eagerly.

"Age!" Hardy said first. He leaned back in his chair.

"A hundred!" Carroll said briefly.

"I see it!" Goldy answered quickly.

"One—thousand—better!" Hardy said slowly. He was holding his cards against the edge of the table, squeezing them slowly apart, his eyes riveted on them. But scarcely were his words out when Carroll cried:

"A thousand better than you!"

Goldy was between two good players, both plainly in earnest. Carroll, with threes only, would never have raised back after Hardy's strange draw. So Goldy laughed lightly and said:

"I guess I'm learning. I lay down my flush."



Then Hardy laid *his* cards upon the table, his left hand resting on them as he looked full in Carroll's eyes and said, very quietly :

"We are playing for pleasure, among friends, Mr. Carroll. I saw your discard ; you saw mine and heard what I said when I made it. I now propose to—divide the pot !"

"Divide nothing !" cried Carroll, dropping into gambler's slang in the excitement of a great hand. "Call or quit !"

"I repeat, I play only for sport," Hardy persisted, very courteously. "It is not the game for me to call ; but I only raise you fifty dollars."

Carroll hesitated only one second. Was it courtesy warning, or a big bluff ? He seemed to think the latter, for he retorted :

"Your fifty and *two* thousand better !"

Dead stillness reigned ; beads stood upon Carroll's brow, spite of his confidence. Even the outs looked nervous, for such a bet was double the tacit limit even of the Orphic plungers.

Only Hardy was placid, smiling his dentist-defying smile, as he answered :

"You *force* me to violate rules. From your draw you can not have the winning hand. As we are not playing for the national debt, *I call you on* — these !"

He spread upon the table a — *sequent-flush of hearts* !

With a hard, gasping breath, Carroll shoved back his chair, his eyes glued to the five hearts.

"That *is* tough !" he cried. "See ! I drew the other ace ! Well ! I've 'recouped' enough for one night. Goldy, settle up the game !"

Then Hardy's elbow chanced to touch the pack on Goldy's left, a few cards falling to the floor.

The nimble Alphonse stooped to pick them up, lifting, with the rest, *the nine and ten of spades* !



## CHAPTER XXIV.

## STILL ON WATCH.

When Will Browne, dogging the supposed holder of the coveted papers, saw Hardy enter the club, a feeling of helplessness seized him. Should he make a charge and arrest the man; trusting that the papers might be found upon him? But what charge could he invent? and, besides, if the papers were not found, he would only have made a scandal and, at the same time, given warning to the confederates.

Beagle, he, of course, believed on Miles' track; but, if Hardy had the papers, to what result?

Indeed, Will's disgust at the detective's seeming sloth, and at the mechanical, clock-work methods he used, forbade his relying upon either for any rapid result. And, if the papers *had* been traded, time was everything!

Restless, uncertain, Browne felt he must try something. He could enter the club and, at least, see what Hardy was doing; so he crossed the street hastily and, at the foot of the steps, almost ran into a boy descending.

"Kerec, Kern'1! It's me! I jist leff' yer a note!" exclaimed Larry, with flourish of the crownless hat.

"For *me*? There!" Will exclaimed; then suddenly recalling the boy's mistake of his identity, he added: "Oh, yes; that's all right. Who was it from?"

"Can't say; didn't read it, yer may simmer!" the boy replied. "It wus give ter me by that wind bladder of a nigger up ter Cap'n Browne's house!"

"Captain Browne's house! On Lexington avenue?"

"That's ther station, yer may ruminate! But ther warn't to be no anser. Hi jest leff' it wid der flunkey in majer-



jin'ral's togs!" Larry answered, jerking contemptuous thumb toward the door.

"Wait a moment!" Will cried. He ran swiftly up the steps, his brain a-whirl with wild conjectures, rising only to be dismissed.

"A note was just left for Colonel de la Plata?" he said to the doorman.

"Yes, sir. I handed it to him just as they went up to the card room."

Browne's last hope of stopping the note—even of seeing, by the handwriting, from whom it came—was gone. Could Gus be corresponding with this worse than blackleg? Scarcely, he thought; both from her slurring remarks about him and her speech as she left the dining-room that night. Could Juny have caught at his suggestion and risked some bold stroke, in her old way, to circumvent the gambler? That seemed more impossible still, in the changed condition of all parties.

But the note was gone; what to do next? Plainly but one thing; never to lose sight of the plotter with the papers on him, until the result of Beagle's chase of Old Jackpots was known. And to reach Beagle the boy was a lucky chance. He asked the doorman if Major Van Borst had returned. To his delight, the servant replied that he had, and was now in the club at supper.

"I will send in your card, sir," the man offered.

"No, I'll wait; there is no hurry," Will answered. "Meanwhile, I'll write another note." He moved to the reception room and hastily scribbled:

*"Am waiting on K. O. T. Must see you. Wait for me till he goes home from club."*

Without either signature or address, he folded the paper and sealed it in a blank envelope. Then he went to the porch and beckoned Larry, standing patiently on the sidewalk.



"Do you know Captain Beagle, the detective?" he asked.

"Yes, when I sees him, yer may investigate," the boy answered.

"Do you know where I live? St. Mark's Place; where you brought me the note this evening?"

"Cert! My brains ain't gone ter Congress," Larry replied. "I'm liable to know were I goes, yer can twitter!"

"Opposite there, nearer Second avenue, is No. 38. Captain Beagle may be there. Take this and ask the lady who opens the door if he is in. If not, you sit and *wait until he comes*. This note must be given into his own hand. You understand?"

"Hi jest do," Larry answered cheerily. "I knows th' scene kerect, yer can elevate. 'Ther house of Marion Delorme. A bucket will be given thee. Grasp hit'! — I know!"

Off ran Larry on his new mission, and Will, re-entering the club, sat down to wait.

At last Major Van Borst appeared and, warmly greeting the cavalryman, acknowledged the tardy receipt of his note.

"Delighted to see you in the flesh, Browne, and so much of it, too," he said. "By Jove, a diet of Indian arrow heads seems to agree with you! Just back from Europe?"

"Yes," Will answered. "And just in time, too. *Apropos*, my visit to-night was for a special purpose. You can do me a favor, Van Borst."

"Then you have only to name it, as you know," his brother officer said frankly.

"I felt that," Will answered. "Besides, I want to give you a warning about the club."

"About the club?" the major echoed. "Why, you know I'm senior of the governing committee. What is wrong about the Orphic?"



"Nothing, that I know," Will answered; "but there is something radically wrong about one of your visiting members."

"De la Plata? I'd wager *he* is the one."

"What I say to you, Van Borst, must be in strictest confidence; otherwise, it may ruin cherished plans of mine and defeat its own object."

"You may consider it strictly so," the major answered. "On my word as an officer and a man."

Then Will briefly stated what he knew of Hardy and his *alias*; his surprise at finding him a member of the Orphic; his greater anger at knowing him a visitor in his own house.

Van Borst listened attentively. Then he gave a long whistle of surprise.

"Well, the fellow has cut a broad swathe here for months," he said; "but somehow I've always mistrusted him; a sort of 'Dr. Fell' dislike I could never analyze. Let's see where he is now."

He left the room, returning shortly with report of the poker party.

"It's the fastest set in the club," he said. "I simply looked into the room, of course; but they are already at it, hammer and tongs; and Carroll is making the play lightning."

"He'll hear thunder before Hardy gets through with him," Browne answered. "Now, I want to stay here until he leaves."

"So do I. And then he'll not return," Van Borst answered, sitting at the desk and filling out a card. "This makes you a member of the Orphic for ten days. Now, have a cigar and tell me all you have done and propose to do in this matter." He touched the bell, adding to the servant who answered it: "As soon as the poker party up stairs begins to break up, notify me promptly."



Long and earnestly the two men talked; first of the present trouble, then of old army times, and of Browne's European trip. The clock struck midnight; then one-two-three! All club lights were out, save the sitting room and hall. Suddenly the servant reappeared and Van Borst said:

"Quick; cross into the reading room in the dark. I must interview this gentleman; but you need not lose sight of him."

Browne moved silently across the hall; and the poker players descended the stairs slowly.

"Rather a late session, gentlemen," Van Borst remarked pleasantly. "Rules, you know."

"Come, old man, let us up easily," Goldy answered, cheerily. "It was a benefit for Carroll ——"

"And he *took* it," that loser answered glumly. "Don't preach to-night, Major."

"I have waited for a few words with you all," Van Borst answered seriously. "Step in here, please. It is a club matter, strictly."

"Then I'll not intrude," Hardy said courteously.

"It concerns you specially," Van Borst answered. "Pray join us;" and following the rather wondering party into the only lighted room, the club governor closed the door. Then he said:

"I have had no time to consult my brother governors, gentlemen, but this is a serious matter. Therefore, I shall act at once and abide their censure. Colonel de la Plata, you have a visiting member's card, I believe?"

"Yes; here it is, Major," Hardy answered, handing the card to Van Borst.

"Then," the latter answered quietly, "it is my duty to withdraw it."

"On what grounds?" Hardy exclaimed.



"That it was obtained on false pretenses," Van Borst answered quietly.

"Do you mean to insult me?" Hardy asked in bullying tone. "If so, I'll teach you ——"

"Wait a moment. This card was issued to Colonel de la Plata. There is no such person ——"

"You lie!" roared Hardy desperately.

A hot flush rose to the old soldier's face; but he controlled himself well; continuing as though uninterrupted.

"And he is personated by a noted professional blackleg, Kyle Hardy!"

With a howl of rage, the gambler sprang forward with raised hand; but the younger men restrained him; and Goldy said meaningly:

"Stop, sir! No brawling here. If Major Van Borst has spoken on false information——"

"There is no mistake," the major interrupted. "This man is a swindler and a blackleg. You had best go quietly," he added to Hardy. "If you attempt any bluster, I'll ring for an officer and enter—*another charge!*"

With glaring eyes and clenched teeth Hardy listened until the last two words. Then his face changed to livid ashen, and he bit his lip fiercely.

"You are on your own dunghill!" he muttered brutally. "Damn you! I'll catch up with you elsewhere. As for your picayune club, I'll leave it gladly."

"Not quite yet," Goldy said, crossing to the door. "Carroll, don't you see it all now?"

"Yes; I see plainly that what was a remarkable hand for a gentleman was a very simple robbery by a blackleg."

"You lie! I say," yelled Hardy, turning on him. "I'll have your blood to pay this insult!"

"Why you want the earth," Carroll answered coolly. "You ought to be satisfied. You've got my money."



With the rage and venom of a wounded wild cat, Hardy sprang toward Carroll, his hand going toward his breast. But quick as was the movement, quicker was the outward flash of Carroll's right hand; and its grasp closed over the gambler's wrist like a vice. A powerful man, with the added strength of desperation, he struggled fiercely to wrench himself away; but the firm, white fingers of the trained athlete hid muscles of steel, and his grasp held.

"I don't want a scene here," Carroll said coolly, as Hardy glared with eyes red with rage into his bright blue ones. "It would be a pleasure to buff you, you blackguard; but our rules forbid. You have a knife in your breast, but I warn you; if you try to draw it, I'll kill you like a dog!"

With a quick twist of his wrist he threw Hardy away from him; almost with the same motion drawing an English bull-dog from his pocket. For Courtenay Carroll was too good an American to neglect a custom, quite national and more than encouraged by the makers and executors of laws, in this rather too free country.

The gambler's bravado left him. With sullen and suddenly brutalized face, he dropped his hands and growled:

"Go on! You've got the age. What do you want of me?"

"That you take yourself off and disgrace the Orphic Club no more," Van Borst said quietly. "Has he robbed any of you to-night?" he added, to Goldy.

"A trifle only," the broker answered. "Here's his order for one thousand; he has a couple more in his pocket, and Carroll owes him twenty-five hundred in ——"

But before he finished, Hardy had thrust his hands in his pockets and tossed notes and gold coin upon the table by the handful.

"There, curse you!" he muttered, with the gamester-fatalist's ever-dogged acceptance of Kismet. "You've

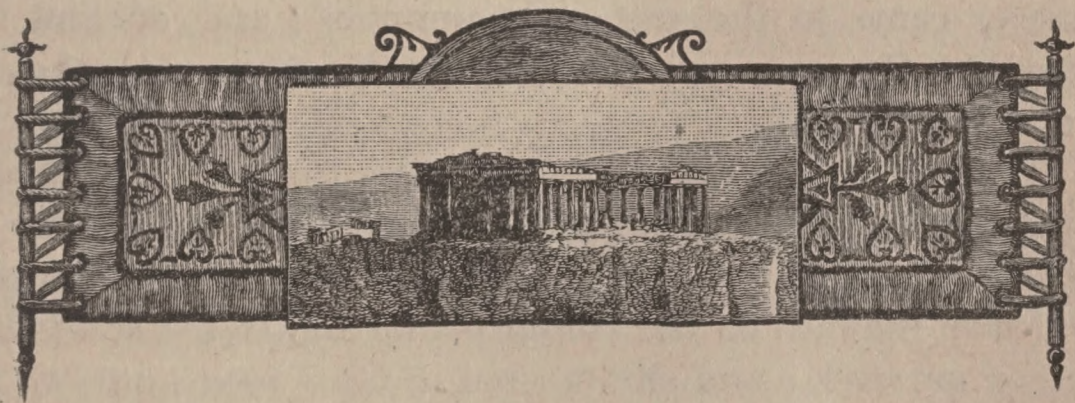


trapped me to steal back your losings ! There's every dollar I have. I had a fifty when I came !”

“ Take it and go !” Carroll said. “ It's a cheap riddance of you, even if you are lying !”

And Hardy, without reply, twitched a bill from the pile ; left the room, and passed rapidly to the street.

And Will Browne followed swiftly through the darkness !





## CHAPTER XXV.

## WAITING !

The breakfast bell woke Juny from heavy sleep the morning after the visit from the Octoroon. Worn out with excitement and watching for Will, she had at last thrown herself upon the bed ; and the healthy nerves of twenty years had soon dominated outside anxieties and borne her off into those realms of profound rest, lying far beyond dream-land.

With first opening eyes, however, the present and its demands came back vividly to her ; and, hastily arranging her toilet, she crossed to Will's door and knocked. No answer came to the repeated summons ; and, opening the door timidly, the girl saw the room empty and the bed untouched.

For a moment all sorts of wild ideas trooped to her brain ; that Will was in danger ; perhaps had been trapped by the blacklegs, even murdered ! Then her healthy common sense and firm reliance on the young man's ability to protect himself, came back ; and she crossed to Gus' room, only to find that vacant, too. So she descended to a quiet breakfast table, every one seeming wrapped in personal thoughts ; and, after an almost silent meal, the two girls passed into the library.

"Has any one called Wilmot ?" Mrs. Browne asked, as they were leaving the table.

"He is not here, Aunt Browne," Juny answered at once, taking the bull by both horns. "Last evening he told me he would spend the night out !"



"Told *you*! Most unconventional confidence to a young lady, with his mother in the house! Well, young people's manners and customs, nowadays, are *very* different from those before poor Browne came for me!"

Juny made no reply; but in the library safely, she closed the door and said bluntly:

"I told a lie, Gus! I don't know where Will is, and I'm just worried to death!"

"What's your worry to mine?" Gus answered. "I have to go on the excursion to-day with M. A. and oh! *if* he should find out about me and that dreadful, low gambler!"

Juny was in the window curtains, peering anxiously down the avenue. Not turning she answered:

"Oh! Why *don't* Will come! If I am dragged on that excursion before seeing him—— I can not—*will* not go until I see him!" And she felt in her bosom for the letter she knew was from Miles.

"And I'm sure," Gus said, "when he does come he'll have something awfully exciting to say——"

"Exciting!" Juny turned staring. "Why did Will tell you——"

"Will? Nonsense!" Gus returned. "I was speaking of Michael Angelo!"

"Oh! bother Michael Angelo!"

"No, I shan't!" Gus answered resolutely. "I'll just be awfully crimp to him."

Juny turned to the window again with a deep sigh and strained her eyes for Will. Evidently there was no help in Gus Browne. She must wait; and, with every restless turn about the room that ended in another longing look down the street, she said to herself:

"Oh! *won't* he get here in time?"

Gus buried herself behind a newspaper, but never moved her eyes from the first line. Juny, too restless to sit, wan-



dered up and down the room. This suspense brought back to her mind the scene in the Shiners' Gap. Every detail came up clear ; and she could see the evil, threatening face of the gambler as he aimed his pistol. It was close work then—not a minute to spare ! What if a minute now should lose her the chance to give Will the old gambler's letter ! And *what* was in that letter ? Could it be a bold ruse to throw him off the trail ; or was it some real light thrown on those mysterious papers ? And what could *they* be ; and, perhaps, once lost——

“ Oh ! Will at last ! ” she cried, turning at a step in the hall ; checking herself as Colonel Baylor entered, and muttering contemptuously, “ Pshaw ! I'm getting real——*nervous !* ”

“ Your aunt says you must be ready punctually at twelve, my little girl,” the old gentleman said, fondly stroking her hair. “ And you know she doesn't like to be kept waiting.”

“ I'll go and look over my costume,” Gus said lazily. “ It isn't one bit crimp to rush, you know. And mamma has the sweetest temper—when nothing crosses it ! ” And she lounged gracefully off to prepare for final conquest of the Art Evolutionist.

“ Why, dad, you look really serious. Is there anything the matter ? ” Juny asked, taking the colonel's hand gently. “ Oh ! can *he* suspect about those men ? ” she added to herself.

“ Nothing really is the matter ; only a bad night, I suppose,” Colonel Baylor answered, taking an arm chair and drawing the girl to a stool by his side. “ Last night, my daughter, I dreamed over the whole scene in the shiners' camp. It was vivid as reality ; the flight, our journey northward ; my adoption of you. Suddenly I seemed to be looking over the edge of a frightful precipice. Something dear to me was falling down—down ! Then, as I stared into the black gulf,



a faint wail floated up from below—‘Dad! Save me!’ and the eyes that met mine, through the darkness, were *yours!* Then the eyes faded into the abyss and the echo of the voice grew fainter—died away!”

Juny had risen with a shudder. Now she threw herself on his breast with a half sob.

“Oh! can it be an omen?” she thought. But she controlled herself, and looking up with a smile, said: “Why, dad, that was only a nightmare, from Aunt Browne’s papers, perhaps. Let me banish the blues with a bright song.”

The girl turned away; then she paused and said:

“Somehow, I can not sing to-day. But, oh! dad, only yesterday I told Will—every day I tell myself—that for you I’d give—*my life!*”

“I know that, my darling!” the old man answered, with his hand on her bright hair. “But, thank God! you will never again be called to risk it for me. But, Juny, my child, you really like Will?”

“Like him! Why, dad, of course I do!” A bright flush mounted to the girl’s face and she walked quickly to the window again. “Oh! I do wish I could see him coming!”

“So you really long to have him here?”

“Indeed—*indeed* I do!” Juny answered absently. “It seems an age since he left—I mean—”

“My daughter, you are really fond of him?”

Juny turned full to him, her blue eyes frankly meeting his a moment. Then they fell to the ground; but the low voice was as firm as sweet, in which she answered: “Oh! dad, I am more than fond of him! I trust him! I *love* him!”

“Thank God! for I am sure he loves you!”

And Washington Clay, appearing in the doorway, beheld a pretty tableau as the beautiful woman fell into the arms the old man held out to her.



"Jesso, Morse Randof, jesso," he said, after a warning cough. "De missus say as how yo' an' Missy Juny better be makin' yo' perforations fur de skurshun party."

"She is right, my child," the colonel said, glancing at the clock. "It is after eleven; and a moment's delay would spoil sister's temper for the day." And again kissing her, he left the room.

"De boss is kerek, sho's yo' born, Missy Juny," Wash said. "Da' ole lady doan stan' no foolishin', 'cepen' she'll raise yo' har!"

Juny was at the window peering down the avenue. She turned suddenly to the negro:

"Oh! Uncle Wash, I *must* see Mr. Will before we go! You must find him for Juny! Here! Take this and go and find him — *somewhere!*" And the girl's hand trembled in her eagerness, as she held out a shining dollar.

Wash looked at the coin, as though it were a curio, for several seconds. Then he said brokenly:

"Wa' dat, Missy Juny? Wa' kin' o' ting *dat?* Wash *kin* go hunt for Morse Will; he *kin* go de hole hog fur de leetle gal he holp ter raise. But he can't do *no mo'!* No, not ef yo' gib him de hole bank!"

He ended with a choked sob, and a tear rolled from his left eye and meandered down the promontory of his flat nose into the valley of its nostril. Juny rushed to him and seized his hands:

"Forgive me, Uncle Wash!" she cried. "*Please* forgive me! It was just dog-mean of me to offer it! But *do* go and hunt for Will! *Please* go, right off!"

"I'se gwine, Missy Juny! I'se gwine right off," the old negro said, scratching his head. "I dunno ware ter look; but I'se gwine. Dis yere's a oncommon large town; but I'se gwine ter fin' him — ef he ent loss!"



## CHAPTER XXVI.

## A GIRL'S RESOLVE.

Wash passed slowly from the room and to the front door, as Juny—forgetful alike of her aunt and the conventions—ran again to the bay window and peered anxiously down the avenue. But she was stopped by the negro's voice, coming from the open door in angry tones :

"Git out, yo' yung debble ! Wa' yo' doin' yeah ? Yo' got no bizness 'mong wite fokes, sho's yo' born ! Got *wot* ? Den gib it yeah ! Gib it ter me !" And slamming the door in the boy's face, Clay re-entered the library.

"Look a-yeah, Missy Juny, da' onplesunt young boy say wot Morse Will don' sen' dis ——"

"*Will ? Give it me, quick !*" cried the girl, seizing the note and rushing to the window. "*Run, Uncle Wash, quick and stop that boy ! He must find Will for me ! Quick ! Don't lose him !*"

Off rushed the old negro, as Juny tore open the scribbled note, reading :

"*On H.'s track. Dare not lose sight of him. Make some excuse to mamma.*"

The girl dropped into a chair, with blanched face and hands pressed hard to her bosom, as she cried :

"Oh ! heaven ! Unless I get Miles' note to him, he may make some fatal error ! Yet, dare I send it ? *Can I risk its loss ?*"

She took the brown envelope from her bosom, tore it open and staggered against the window, wide-eyed with amaze, as she read :



*"Raise tiles, second floor of red farm-house, and secure K. H. forgeries. Will be there noon to-morrow."*

With hands pressed upon her temples, Juny reread the words, "*noon to-morrow*;" and the old gambler had sent the note the previous night. There must be importance in the hour; else he had not named it; and who so likely to remove the papers as the Coyote himself? Yet, Will wrote that *he* was on the Coyote's track; would not lose sight of him. Could this be a blind; a decoy? No; the shrewd old gambler had written names! Suddenly an idea flashed into her mind. This was the secret between her aunt and Miles! But it died away as she remembered the gambler's insolence and scoffing tone.

Walking the floor rapidly, with these thoughts crowding each other in her brain, Juny's face grew quiet and resolved; and she sat at the desk and drew paper toward her, with a quiet but brave smile upon her lips. Writing rapidly, she folded Miles' letter in her note; sealing it securely.

"That for Will!" she said, as the front door opened and Wash peered cautiously into the hall.

He knew his companion would not be strongly approved of by Mrs. Browne; but the coast was clear and he ushered Larry into the library.

"Oh! Larry Miggs!" Juny cried. "Where is *he*—Will—Captain Browne! *Why* don't you answer? I mean the gentleman that gave you this note?"

"Oh—*him*?" Larry answered. "Wy, me leddy! he warn't no Browne. That note was give ter me by Kurn'l de la Plata!"

"Who? a tall, black-looking man, with ——"

"'Not so, upon my hollow dome, yer grace'!" quoted Larry. "'Th' Kurn'l is a blonde, mos' 'fair as thee, fair Egyp'; and he's got a brown merstach an' brown eyes."



"What *do* you mean?" the girl asked anxiously. Possible plots and counterplots rose to her suspicions. The boy described Will; but named the Coyote.

"Who gave you this note?" she asked.

"He did; ther Kurn'l. 'Meself and miserly knows ther man'!" Larry answered.

"Where did *he* get it?" the girl again asked, looking straight into the boy's fearless eyes.

"Wy, he *writ* it! I seed him meself."

"You are *sure* of that?" Juny again asked.

"Cert, me lady! yer may emphasize!" Master Miggs said, standing his cross-examination bravely. "But yer cert'ny *do* ask questions. He writ that note at Cap'n Hunter Beagle's desk an' give 't ter me with his own hands."

"It certainly *is* his writing," Juny said. "And you are sure of the man who gave it?"

"I'd swear it fore the 'portants, graves an' reverent signers'," Larry answered solemnly. "It was give ter me by Kurn'l de la Plata himself."

"And who is Captain Hunter Beagle?" Juny once more queried.

"The boss detective, he is," Larry answered. "He's the kind as knows a man may take his smile an' be a willain!"

A sudden light broke into Juny's mind. The writing surely was Will's. The boy seemed honest and swore the writer gave it to him; and Kyle Hardy would never have been at the detective's desk. For some reason Will had taken the felon's name, at least to this boy.

"Can you take the same man a reply?" she asked.

"Well, ma'am, I kin try," he answered promptly. "But he told me he might be here as soon as I was. He's leff Cap'n Beagle's, sure!"

And again Juny clasped her hands and murmured: "Too late! He'll be too late!"



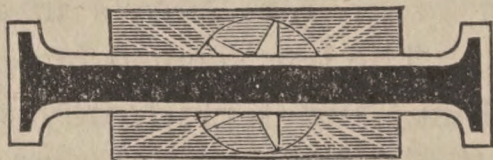
Just then the clock chimed and Juny, glancing up, saw it was quarter to twelve.

"Call me a cab ; *quick*, Uncle Wash !" she cried. " Don't lose a minute ! I'll meet you at the corner ! "

As the old negro ran out to obey, she again seized the pen and wrote rapidly ; and while she wrote, a sweet, sad smile hovered about her lips.

" Here, Larry," she said, handing him the first note. " That man will come here soon. Watch for him, but do not be seen except by Uncle Wash ! Give him this note the instant he comes ! " She drew him to the bay window and pushed him down behind the curtains : " Mind ! do not be seen ! " - Then turning, she placed the last note conspicuously upon the lamp shade on the center table.

" That for dear old dad," she said. " And now, to save *him* ! There is one chance left and I'll take that ! I'm only a girl, but, with God's help, I'll beat the Coyote—or *die* ! "





## CHAPTER XXVII.

## DRESS REHEARSAL.

The clock struck twelve as Wash remounted the steps of the Browne mansion, looking over his shoulder and shaking his head. But wisdom should look before; and had his done so, he had not bumped into Mr. Michael Angelo Lake, about to pull the bell.

"'Scuse me, boss! Lor' gorry! *Wa' dat!*" Wash cried, as a puff of wind raised the long, light duster concealing the Evolutionist's study in aquatic costumes. And a wonderful result he had evolved; a sickly green shirt with ample rolling collar, disappearing into pale grey knickerbockers, which in turn gave place to blue stockings and brown canvas shoes. Then Wash waved the visitor in with much ceremony, just as Mrs. Browne joined her brother and Gus in the hall.

"Your promptitude is commendable, sir," Mrs. Browne said coolly to the visitor. "I regard punctuality a convention to be strictly observed."

"Thanks!" responded the Evolutionist. "And I hope my little effort in costume is equally as welcome as my arrival."

"Doubtless," responded the Roman mother of society briefly. "Juniata!"

There was no answer; and the colonel entered the library, as Washington fled to the dining-room with eyes wildly rolling toward the head of the house.

"I do hope *you* like me, Miss Gustine," Lake said.

"Oh! Mr. Lake," simpered the girl.

"I mean—my little costume, of course," he explained.



"Oh! its just too awfully crimp for anything," gushed his pupil in art.

"Juny is not here," the colonel said from the library.

"She should remember," answered Mrs. Browne, in the doorway, "that she is now in society; and punctuality is one of its cardinal virtues."

"Bless the girl! where *is* she!" her brother answered. "Perhaps in her room. I'll call her."

"I did so as I came down—*Juniata!*" and Mrs. Browne called, toward the drawing-room.

But the colonel saw the note on the lamp and took it up.

"Bless me! what's this? A note from her!" And he read aloud: "'*Don't be uneasy, dearest dad. Will and I have started. We will beat you all to Browne Beach*'— Well! That's odd."

"It is worse than 'odd,' brother Randolph," Mrs. Browne retorted severely. "It is sufficiently unconventional to be scandalous!"

"Why, she is perfectly safe with Will, sister."

"Possibly," she answered dryly. "But with such ideas, she will never acquire proper style in society."

"If she doesn't," the colonel said curtly, "she has something far better than style!"

"Brother Randolph!" There was a world of wondering reproof in the tone.

"She has a true woman's heart," he went on ruthlessly. "That will keep her safe in a far better place than — society!"

"Better place!" Mrs. Browne echoed feebly.

"Yes, in the heart of the lucky fellow who makes her his wife!"

There being no answer to such heresy, the matron attempted none; but Gus, catching only the last words, gushed:



"A wedding, Uncle Ran! Oh! I just *dote* on weddings; and Juny's would be just too eminently crimp for anything!"

"Augustine! restrain that unconventional exhuberance," reproved the mother, Roman once more. But she added, half to herself, "I have really been so upset in the past two days, that I scarcely know whether I was born in Colepeper Court House, Virginia, or in Topeka, Kansas!"

"But you know," Gus confided, *sotto voce*, to Lake, "I *do* think weddings are just—crimp!"

"Ah! You know *I* do, Miss Gustine," he answered. "And there is *one* particular wedding into which I could concentrate the whole palpitating soul of my Art for evolution of the decorations; could coerce the dimly-gray draperies to pulsate impalpably in trained unison to the unheard harmonies of heart and neutral tint!"

"Brother, the carriage is waiting," Mrs. Browne broke in severely. "As we have not your daughter to wait for, we will defer house decoration and catch the next train! Come, Augustine!"

And as the door banged and the liveried footman clung to his perch, Washington Clay followed his bulging eyes from the dining-room to the bay window of the library.

"Jesso, jesso!" he muttered. "Dere dey goes, 'thout Missy Juny! Dese is quar doin's, sho's yo' born. Come out yeah, yo' onpleesunt boy." And he drew back the curtains, showing Larry crouched in tragic pose.

"Say, snowball! This *is* a boss rehearsal, yer may bet yer bones! This is my castile of Ru-ell, three leagues from whence! *Ha! ha!* 'The Liar's skin's too short ter night! I'll eat it out with the forkses!' How's that fur de boss Reecher-loo?"

"Looka yeah, boy, is yo' dun gone crazy? Missy Juny tell me let yo' stay yeah tell Morse Will dun cum back. 'Spos'n' Morse Will don' never cum back, how Wash gwyne



ter 'bey dem obstructions? Yah—yah—*ye*—ah! I tell yo, old niggahs hab de debble ob a time, when dey gits in fust Virginny famlys, an' try to hole up dere eend in—sassiety! Hard times, sho's yo' born!"

And shuffling about the room, the black sang:

"Hoein' in de cornfiel', cuttin' shuggah cane;  
Wukkin' in de sunshin', wukkin' in de rain;  
Wukkin' like de debble fur mitey leetle  
*P—A—Y—!*"

"Brayvo! Otheller! *Ankor!*" Larry cried, applauding wildly. "Yer're engaged! Jest step roun' to t' agency, sign yer papers and draw yer fust week's salery in advance!"

"Looka year, yo' boy! Yo' jes stay quiet tell Morse Will com', sho's yo' born!"

With bent back and slaverling lips, Larry glared at the negro; darting a stiff forefinger at him as he cried:

"'Thou liest! I am old, infirm, most free bill, *but*—thou *liest!*' Kerect, Erdolfus! Never min' stayin' ter entertain me! Yer kin leave!" he added, with magnificent gesture to the door. And as Clay, with access of outraged dignity threatening apoplexy, moved toward it, Larry stopped him: "Sa-a-y! Hen-ner-ree Clay, 'fore yer fust appearance, ye jest git some burnt cork an' make up fur a blonde!"

When the negro slammed the door in great disgust, Larry moved slowly about the room, smacking his lips as he examined the rich decorations and tried the springs of chair after chair. At last, throwing himself full length on a sofa, his admiration vented in a long, low whistle:

"*Phew!* Well, this *is* style! An' I'm a fixtur here ter wait for that Juny's beau-feller. Well, wot a pair o' eyes that gal has got, yer may spekerlate!"

"'Larry!' says she, 'remain until Will Browne comes an' give him this anser, on yer life!' Maybe I *won't*



remain. Maybe I *won't* give him the note—yer may liquedate !”

Then, urged by his lost sleep of the previous night, Mr. Miggs began to doze off ; suddenly aroused by the entrance of Wash and Will Browne.

“ Yeah be Morse Will, sho's yo' born !” Wash cried in great excitement. “ Missy Juny, ge'en him de anser ter dat note !”

“ Not fur *yer*, Mister !” Larry had sprung to his feet in attitude of defiance. “ This yere note's not fur Kur'nel de la Plata !”

“ Oh ! *That* was an error,” Will said, suddenly recollecting, “ I am Captain Will Browne.”

“ Jesso, boy ; jesso !” put in Clay. “ Dis yere Morse Will, sho nuff !”

“ But, *where* is Juny ?” Will cried.

“ Gone ! Skedaddled ! Tuk ther start on 'em all an' played it alone ! As Davy Mayo says, wen he's Frank Crockett, 'Fur a lugger in love an' a duster in *wah*, she'll wed the fair Ellen or young Lochin-vah !”

“ What *do* you mean, boy ?” Will asked sharply.

“ ‘ I'm munchin' Malagas. I means mischief !’ ” Larry answered dramatically. “ Yere ! See fur y' self ;” and he handed the note Juny left.

Will tore it open, reading with hungry eyes :

“ ‘ *Enclosed is the note Old Jackpots sent last night. I opened and read it. I have gone for those papers. I will get them or die !*’ ”

Will opened the second paper, muttering : “ What *can* she mean ?—‘ *forgery—second-story—old farm*’—My God ! What rashness ! She may meet those villains ! There is yet time ! Another train at ——” The cuckoo clock chimed out the hour. The man dropped into a chair —— “ And I have missed it !”



Larry, standing by in deep sympathy, covered it by a wink at Wash. Then, softly patting his own accompaniment, he sang :

“ It'll never do to gib it up *so*, Mr. Browne,  
It'll never do to gib it up *so* !

“ Say, guv'ner ! 'Tain't no use a-settin' thar ! Git up an' dust ! Ther's another train at 12:30. We kin ketch *that*. Maybe *I* knows ther coal-heaver—an' I'll interjuice yer ! ”

“ All right ! ” Will cried, jumping up. “ You come along, too ! ”

“ Yer may kalkilate ! ” Larry answered, holding the door open. “ Ye jis' take the lead an' I'll support yer to the queen's taste ! We'll jest gib Juny a benefit, in a comberna-  
*shun* ! ”





## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## A MORNING ALARM.

When Kyle Hardy slunk from the Orphic Club, his fortunes seemed at the lowest ebb. Detected, dismissed, with all chance of recuperation gone, the stern fatalism of his craft still clung to him.

"By Luck!" he said to himself, with a bitter laugh, "that *was* a tough call of the cat-hop. I was a cool five thousand ahead! Well, I'm fifty ahead anyway, as interest for holding their cash. Wonder if I can't double that at Mike's?"

And turning eastward, Hardy strode rapidly off; made several turns and finally halted in front of a shabby door and pulled the bell.

Will Browne, following him on the opposite side, saw a small shutter in the door slide back and a face peer curiously out, before it opened and Hardy disappeared.

"A faro dive!" Will said to himself. "I suppose it's a daylight job now!" And he lit a fresh cigar, seated himself on a dry goods box and prepared to stay on picket indefinitely, just as the clock of the near-by church chimed four.

Meantime, his faithful ambassador, Larry Miggs, was keeping similar vigil at St. Mark's Place. Beagle's mother had no idea when he would return; and Larry, true to his instructions to give the note into the detective's own hand, said he would wait awhile. Dozing on the steps, with occasionally a start at stray passers, he was still asleep when Will Browne turned from Second avenue; saw Kyle Hardy stagger up his steps; and then crossed and saw Larry.



"What does this mean?" he asked, shaking the boy.  
"Didn't you give him my note?"

The boy yawned, stretched himself and answered with a shake of the head:

"Nope! Ain't come home yit."

"That's odd!" Will said half to himself. "It's strange he'd take all night."

"Kerect, Kurn'l," Larry said. "Ain't *you* been out all night, too?"

"See the old lady?" Will asked shortly.

"*Um! um!*" Larry responded. "She's a lily of the wally, yer may rumernate! I think I'll engage her to play Julee dee Mortimere to my Reecher-loo."

He stopped suddenly, as the door opened and the yellow ochre statue—like Memnon, vocal at sunrise—gritted out:

"Don't have a circus outside, Browne. Better come in." And holding open the door of the office, she admitted them, not without a most suspicious glance at Will Browne's somewhat demoralized evening toilet.

"Up all night?" Mrs. Beagle queried; and as Will nodded affirmatively, she added: "Shadow?" Again Will nodded; upon which the ochre softened sufficiently to vouchsafe:

"Tough work! Like some coffee?"

"Yer may rumernate, mad-*am!*" Larry answered promptly; "seeing as neither of us has tetched food since yestidday noon! Hot and strong fur two, *ef* yer please!" And he winked at Browne; adding, as the old woman left the room:

"'Scuse my state-*ment*, Kurn'l; but ef yer ain't fly fer the swill, I'll jist surround both cups."

Without reply Will went to the window, turned the blinds and sat down to watch Hardy's front door. Little chance, there seemed to him, that the gambler would come out for a while; for he had been under strain all night, and appeared somewhat the worse for liquor, too. Will was sure he had



the papers, and equally sure that he could not have left them at the gambling den. So, he felt that he must take no possible chance for Hardy to give him the slip.

That Beagle had not returned puzzled him greatly; for, assured as he must be of the passage of the papers, there was no great point to gain in shadowing Tip Miles.

Will Browne drank his coffee with brief thanks, and returned to watch Hardy's door. Ever and again he looked impatiently at his watch; eight—nine—ten o'clock passing, yet no Beagle in sight.

"Larry," Will said at last, "you know where I live?"

"Cross the street," the boy answered. "Were I gin yer ther note yestiddy."

"I mean you know where Captain Wilmot Browne lives?"

"Were I took ther note from th' nigger? Cert! Kurn'l. Yer can gamble Larry never furgits."

Will sat and wrote the hasty line to Juny; gave it to the boy with strict injunctions to put it in her hands only.

Scarcely had Larry left, when the amateur detective, sitting at the window, was startled by the sharp report of a pistol ringing through the narrow street. He leaned against the bowed shutter and listened. Then a window of Hardy's house opened, and a woman's voice loudly called:

"Police! Hel-lp! Murder!"

In an instant Browne was at the front door; but the yellow ochre statue was before him, with her hand upon the latch.

"Hunter's tenants!" she said. "Be discreet!"

Browne stared at her without reply; dashed into the street and crossed toward the sounds, as several others did at the same moment.

But a cab drew up at the door, Captain Beagle jumped out before it stopped and, mounting the steps, waved them all back: "I am Detective Hunter Beagle," he said, "and am sent by the chief to take charge of this house. I only



want one man," he added, catching sight of Will Browne. "This gentleman will do!"

The growing crowd grumbled, as crowds will; but Beagle opened the door, entered the house and closed it after him.

Browne had only time to note that the detective had changed his dress completely, from the night before, even to his hat; and that there was something peculiarly dogged about him, very different from his usual jaunty ease. But before he could note more they were up stairs, in the room whence the cries proceeded. As they entered, Beagle muttered:

"Great God! Has he murdered her?"

Lili was extended across the bed, motionless and lying on her face; and in the limp right hand was loosely held a revolver; the odor of burnt powder still heavy on the air. The old quadroon had thrown herself by her child, the withered arm around her, and with wild words of endearment and entreaty.

No one else was in the room; and with quickness of thought Browne twitched the revolver from the little hand and sprang into the hall again.

"I'll search the house!" he cried to Beagle; and running down stairs he locked both doors inside, removing the keys; searched the parlor and dining-room and again passed up stairs. Hardy was not in the house, unless concealed, and again Browne went through every closet, and under every curtain. He had not gone through the front door, plainly; and looking from the back window, through the little paved yard, Browne saw the green wicket in the rear wall ajar.

Beagle had lifted up the old quadroon, who still struggled hysterically; then turned the graceful form of the daughter over on her back. As he did so, the lips moved in a heavy sigh; and the hardened detective kneeling by her, with finger on her pulse, murmured: "Thank God! She lives!"



There was no sign of blood ; but the trained eye, following the direction of the pistol, saw a large hole freshly torn in the plaster.

"She's not hurt," he said to Browne as he entered. "Fired the shot herself. Must have been defending herself against that brute !"

"He has escaped through the back alley," Browne answered. "Who is the woman ?"

"Don't know," Beagle answered promptly. "His wife, probably. Help me revive her."

"But I must find him !" Browne said. "I haven't lost sight of him since he got those papers ——"

"He didn't get them," Beagle answered. "Hardy and Jackpots are to meet for delivery to-day at two o'clock ——"

"Are you *sure* ? Where ?"

"Sure ? Am I ever uncertain ?" Beagle answered, as he twitched some feathers from the duster and burned them under Lili's nose. "They meet at Browne Beach. Miles leaves the station at two o'clock sharp and *I* go with him as his detective."

"You ! Browne Beach !" Will Browne exclaimed. "Why, uncle, mamma and all our party go there ! They'll spoil everything ! I must try and stop them !" And without waiting reply, he dashed down stairs, *en route* for home.

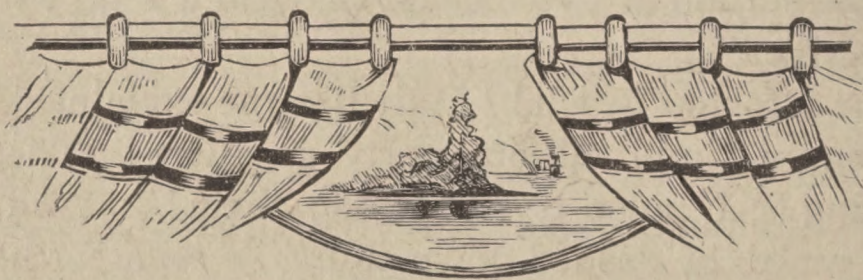
Beagle had no idea of letting Browne know the ridiculous part he had played in the night's adventures ; and, after all, as Miles really had made the engagement, he would be apt to carry it out. He could not have communicated with Hardy meantime, as Browne had kept the latter in sight. Hardy would be likely to go to the Sound, after the domestic fracas, to get out of town and let the excitement blow over. Therefore, Beagle thought, it was well for every reason to have the Browne party stopped ; and he would be on hand at the depot, to get even with his recent captor.



Thus satisfied, he again turned to the fainting woman, now partly recovered and striving to collect her thoughts. Lili's eyes fell upon Beagle's face.

"Ah! Monsieur Jonson!" she cried. "*You* here? How good—how kind of you! Ah! your warning was true! I have"—she hesitated a moment, then went on with confident trust—" *seen* her; I have *been* there!"

Then the detective, still holding the slim, white hand very tenderly, listened while Lili told her story, which may be better understood in fewer words.





## CHAPTER XXIX.

## A BRUTE'S DEMAND.

Kyle Hardy reeled from the faro den without a dollar ; his head whirling with bad brandy ; his heart black with rage at his luck and hatred of his kind.

Only one resolve was in his mind—the woman, who had so faithfully and unflinchingly followed his fortunes, should now sacrifice everything for his last desperate effort to recoup them.

She had diamonds, given by her father—the gambler reflected—and he might raise the money on them from Schonstein, should his bad luck still follow and force him to pay for the papers Miles held, instead of having them by fraud, or even force, as he still designed.

For those papers he *must* have now ; even did he have to do murder to get them ! They *must* be shown at Washington, the reward secured, and himself out of the country before the week ended. And after all, he thought doggedly, they were his by right !

Thus thinking—but with nerves shattered by the excitement and the bad brandy he had swallowed to allay it—Hardy lurched into his own room, set the alarm clock at ten, then threw himself, half-dressed, upon his bed and was soon in deep, uneasy sleep.

His heavy breathing sounded through the still house ; and, listening to it long and restlessly, Lili opened her door and glided across the hall. For a moment she hesitated, then opened the door noiselessly, stood by the bedside and looked down with burning eyes upon the sleeper.



The girl was very pale; the clear oval of her cheeks stained with long weeping; but, with hands pressed hard upon her heaving bosom, she forced herself to calmness.

Long and steadily she gazed down upon the now hardened and brutalized features of the man, whose far different aspect had won her young heart to yield its all to him.

Gradually her face softened with those memories; and—impulsive as all her race are ever—she sunk upon her knees by the bedside; her face hidden in the shadow of her loose, black hair; her forehead bowed upon the hot and feverish hand of the only man she had ever loved.

Then, from the wrung heart of the erring but gentle woman, a petition went up to the Throne's foot, for forgiveness to her own wrong doing; for pity and mercy to her wronger. And may it not have floated upward, as pure and as acceptable, as though it had arisen from fashion's most favored fane!

At last she rose; her face sad and deadly pale, but calm resolve stamped strong upon it.

"And so, farewell, Kyle!" she whispered. "May He forgive; and help us both to better lives!"

And great drops of gentle pity—for herself and for him—rose to the eyes; one overflowing, as she leaned above the sleeper, and dropping lightly on his hot forehead.

With a start, the man awoke; sitting bolt upright and thrusting his hand instinctively under his pillow. Then, waking fully, he recognized the woman and, seizing her arm, tried roughly to draw her down by his side.

With changed face and all her strength, she resisted; striving to free her wrist from his grasp.

"Why, what's the matter, sweetheart?" he said. "I was just dreaming of you! Come; sit here and let me tell you all about it."

"No, no! not now! Let me go, *please!*" she cried.



"Not till you buy your release, sweetheart!" he answered; throwing his arm round her waist and trying to draw her to him.

"Let me go! *Please* let me go!" she repeated, struggling. "You *must*! you shall!" And suddenly wrenching herself free, she stood erect by the bedside.

"Why, what the devil has come to you?" he growled, staring at her face. "It's something new for you to put on airs and make me beg for a caress!"

"It is something new for me to feel how little value they are to you!" the woman answered slowly.

"Come, Lill, let's be reasonable," the man answered, sitting upon the bed's edge. "Besides, that sort of chaff is no good, any time; and just now, I was going to ask a favor of you!"

"What favor could you possibly ask of me—now?" the woman returned coldly.

"Well, I'll tell you, Lill," Hardy answered rather sheepishly. He rose and tried to pass his arm about her; but she drew back and stood calmly facing him. "You see I've had a streak of nigger luck and——Why, what the devil's the matter with you, girl? Can't I even touch you?"

"Nothing is the matter—with *me*," Lili answered. "Go on; what is it you want of me?"

"Well; as I was saying, the turn has gone dead against me; and now I haven't a dollar! A streak of light shows to me, if I can only raise the wind. With one thousand dollars to-day, I can go to Washington and return with three, before to-morrow night!"

"Well, what else?" the girl queried, machine-like.

The gambler stared at her listless pose and expressionless face, as he answered:

"Why, only this, Lill. I was going to ask if you would loan me your jewelry. I can raise the money on it from



a friend. Only for a day or two, Lill. You'll get it back."

"I do not want it back," she answered in the same mechanical way. "What you gave me is yours, and you are welcome to it. It is ready for you, *now*."

The manner, even more than the words, made the man stare.

"Well, you're wonderfully obliging!" he growled in discontent. "Look here, Lill, there's something behind all this gentleness that I don't understand; and ——"

"You *can* understand, very easily," the girl replied; her voice firm, but her face growing deadly white, as she spoke. "Come with me, Kyle. I said the jewels were ready for you. *See!*"

She had crossed the hall; and, with the last word, threw open the door of her own bedroom.

The bed had not been used; across it lay a few plain dresses, while a large trunk, half-packed, stood open near.

The old quadroon, folding some garment on the bed, paused as the pair entered; glaring at the man with hate-lit, bloodshot eyes.

"See!" the girl repeated. She pointed to the bureau, on which all her jewelry—rings, bracelets and ear-drops—stood ranged in open cases.

"There is every jewel you ever gave me," she said gravely; her voice shaking as she added: "Even the little ring you gave me—on my sixteenth birthday! *All* are there!"

"What *do* you mean? Lili! *how* could you know I was going to ask you?" Hardy cried.

"I did not know that," she answered gently. "I only knew that they were *yours*; that I —— I am going away!" Her bosom rose and fell fiercely; but she controlled her voice;



and her splendid head was held erect, as her eyes calmly met the rising rage in his.

"*Going away!* Why you must be the dam ——"

She stopped him quietly: "Do not swear at me! You have done so sometimes, when you may have had the right; when I gave you the right. Now, I have recalled that!"

"Why you —— you're *crazy!*" the man cried.

"No; I *have* been; but I now am sane, thank God! I have sinned all these years, trusting in you; believing in you, next to my belief in the good God! Now, for the first time, I know how false you are!"

"To all but *you*, Lill," he answered uneasily. "To *you*, I am as true as ——"

"Do not lie, Kyle Hardy, in the last words you speak to me forever!"

The woman's quiet, cold reproach struck the gambler's brutal nature like a lash. His face grew purple, as he fiercely blurted out:

"In the devil's name! speak plainly!"

"You asked for the jewels," she answered coldly. "There they are; all of them. And they are all *yours!*"

"Well, I'm glad *something* is conceded to be mine," he said brutally; but he took the trinkets from the cases, dropping them loosely into his pocket. "All right; you needn't put on airs; for I'll return them within the week."

"You can never return them—to *me*," she said, in the same cold monotone. "I shall be far from here!"

Again Hardy, struck by the iteration, stared at her with a dazed glance. Then it wandered to the trunk; caught the old quadroon's red eyes, and read the hatred in them.

Then he said brutally:

"All your jewels are *not* here. Your solitaires ——"

"*They* are not yours," Lili answered. "They were given my mother by my father! They are not even *mine!*"



"Bosh! I'll have no damned sentiment!" roared he, purposely lashing himself into fury. "*Everything* you have is mine! I've supported you, and that cursed old mulatto, for six years now; and I guess I have the right to borrow a couple of diamonds for a day!"

"You have all the rest," Lili answered quietly.

"And those solitaires are worth double all the rest," answered Hardy; forgetting that he had told her differently every time he gave her an off-color stone. "I want those earrings! Give 'em to me!"

"They are *not* mine," Lili repeated, firmly. "I could not give them, even to——*my husband!*"

"And what am I, pray?" the gambler retorted fiercely. "No man could be truer husband to ——"

"You lie! Kyle Hardy!" the girl cried; at last losing control of her hot Creole temper. "You lie now, to get possession of those pitiful stones, as you lied to the child you deceived, six years ago; to the woman who trusted, blindly idolized you, ever since! But *now*, now that I know you, *miserable* that you are! I shall see you no more!"

The brutal anger of the man cowered before the wrathful swirl of the wronged womanhood that lashed him.

"Lili! My own darling girl!" he protested, "I love you this moment, as I always have loved ——"

"Perhaps!" she broke in with infinite scorn. "And I know, *now*, how much that was. Now, I know why you insulted my blood last evening; why you dared lift your hand to my mother! Kyle Hardy, I have——*seen her!*"

"Seen *her!* *Who?*"

"Yes; and *warned* her!" Lili went on hotly. "Knowing what I knew; feeling as I felt then, I *could not* risk her suffering as I had! So I went there with *maman!*"

"Damnation!" Hardy roared, his eyes blazing and veins knotting on his temples. "Of whom are you talking?"



"Of the girl you lied to, as you did to me!" Lili answered, never quailing. "The girl you dared ask to marry you—Augustine Browne! The girl who had spurned you, before I told her you were a gambler and, in the sight of God, the husband of—the *negress*!"

With a rage-stifled oath and arm uplifted, Hardy sprang toward the girl.

"If I believed, I'd break your——"

The sentence was never finished. Her red eyes fastened on his every motion, the old quadroon had stealthily—imperceptibly—crept around the bed. Now, as the gambler strode forward, she gave one savage snarl and leaped before him, a gleaming knife uplifted in her sinewy, lean right hand.

"Maman! for God's sake!" Lili cried, rushing to her. "For my sake! Maman!"

But Hardy caught the glint of the steel just in time. He recoiled, the evil gleam of baffled hate in his eyes. Suddenly they fell upon a large, keen hatchet Lili had used on her trunk, and, an instant later, it swung above his head; his eyes glowing like some venomous snake's upon the crouched form of the old quadroon.

"Damn you!" he screamed. "You meddling nigger hag! *You* set her on to this! I'll split your——"

He stopped in midword, the color dropping from his face, the hand swinging the hatchet paralyzed above his head. For over the quadroon's shoulder gleamed the bright barrel of a revolver; and Lili's eyes—clear and undaunted as those

"Of mountain cat, who guards her young,"  
burned into his with fascinating, cowing fire.

"Move, and I'll kill you!"

The girl's words fell clear and strong; the click of the lock, that prefaced them, lending added meaning.



“Oh! Do not make me a murderer!” she cried pleadingly. “You have made me *worse*, I know; but now, Kyle, spare me—and go! You *shall not* harm my mother! She is all I have in this world, now—all I have!”

But as the girl plead so earnestly, the brute courage of the man, changing to cunning before the leveled pistol, began to return. Slowly he dropped the threatening hand holding the hatchet, and tossed it away from him.

“Pardon my temper, Mother Duvrai!” he cried. “And Lili, poor, wronged child, forgive——”

The tall, lithe form of the Octoroon shivered; her face twitched under the nervous strain. The man’s words were cut short by the loud report of the pistol; Lili was stretched prone across the bed, and the horrified cries of the quadron echoed through the silent street.





## CHAPTER XXX.

## AT BROWNE BEACH.

The Browne Beach farm was a pretty and pleasant-lying property ; similar to a dozen others, that combine toy-farming with villa luxury, along the waters of the Sound.

A pretty stretch of fat grain land led up to the residence cottage, seated midway between road and water ; while a long, winding green lane led, between the fields, straight from the road to the old red farm-house, perched close over the water's edge.

May Bower cottage was a picturesque and rather pretentious villa. In her day, it had been the favorite residence of pretty May Baylor, whose Redfern tastes and rearing had preferred its pleasant quiet to the rush of city gayety. Since her death, in New Orleans, shortly after the war's close, the house had never been occupied. Colonel Baylor had persistently refused good offers to buy the property, as well as propositions to rent, or to work it. He preferred paying a manager for simple care of the place ; and—through that mysterious connection, which had so distressed Juny—Tip Miles had succeeded to that post, immediately after the colonel had gone abroad.

The old card-sharp had proved a practical farmer ; and never had the returns from the place, in cereals and truck, been half so large as since, in his own words, " Tip bossed the deal."

But the most picturesque point in the whole landscape was that old, red farm-house ; now almost entirely unused and rapidly falling into ruin. Built on a little spur—jutting



into the Sound and forming its own tiny harbor—the gable of this quaint old farm-house jutted far over the water, on supporting piers; and its diamond-latticed panes, rarely opened, gave a lovely sweep of water-view for miles. Half of the house overhung the water; its front facing the little lane, with its low, vine-covered porch and trimly-kept flower patch. For in the lower floor, manager Miles had his composite counting-room, office and seed-store; and that he did not despise to use it as carpenter-shop also, piles of loose blocks and shavings, reaching up to the side windows, testified.

This was the mooted point of Mrs. Browne's report to her brother; whether, or not, to pull down the building and save the lumber in it, or to let it await the not distant time when it would fall of its own motion.

And from this quaint retreat Tip Miles emerged the morning after his escapade with the detective, his face as wooden and placid and his manner as quiet and slouching, as though he had never held a sequent-flush, or "held up" a thief-taker in the act.

Yet Mr. Miles looked rather anxiously at his watch; then less anxiously up the lane. "'Leven o'clock an' all's well!" he said to himself, with a grim smile. "Wonder ef Captain Hunter Beagle has got up yet? That was a pretty bold job; but I kept well inside the law; and it can't touch me, except for tearing that sheet, even if the captain peaches. But he *won't*! He'll have some wonderful lie ready; got plenty of time to build one; and his reputation demands it! Well; my precious pal, Kyle Coyote, seems spilin' for those papers! *He'll* be on time, sure; and I think the trap is laid to snap! I've got him dead to rights. Wonder if he'll raise the money? I might as well handle a thousand of his club stealings as not. And unless I do, he'll never handle them little documents under the hearth. No! Not if I pull down this rattletrap old house over his head! Lady Lofty's



always begging to pull it down. Well, if she's only patient awhile, it'll *fall* down of itself."

He smoked awhile in silence ; then his face lit into a grim smile, as he re-entered the house saying aloud :

"Yes, I'd better make burglary a little more convenient for him."

Picking up a hatchet from the work-bench, Miles ascended the creaking stair leading to the room overlooking the water. The door was locked with hasp and staple, held by a pad-lock ; and into this Miles slipped the key—striking it heavily on one side with the hatchet. Then he tried it, but the spring had broken and would not work. Removing the key, he struck the hatchet into the door post, leaving it there, and slowly descending the stairs.

Then the farmer wandered slowly up the lane, turning down the road and stopping at the country store that was bar-room, exchange and post-office in one.

"Letter for you, neighbor Miles," the shop-keeper said ; and Miles, knowing the one correspondent who would address him there, lazily took the letter and read Mrs. Browne's fine, Italian characters. Then he whistled low and thoughtfully, for they ran :

"*Brother and all of us make a trip to Browne Beach to-morrow noon. It may be needless warning ; but he should not see you.*"

Miles thought a moment ; then he lazily sat down on a box and began to whittle.

"If *they* should come together," he thought, "Hardy is sharp enough to keep out of their way. Anyhow, old Baylor will never recognize him now. Let things drift along ; there's plenty of current and the water is clear, so far. Wonder if Beagle 'll come at three o'clock to see what I meant? He's no good ; but if he does come, he may turn out a witness on the Coyote. And he won't quarrel with



me ; his reputation won't allow that. He'll lie out, sure !” And Miles' diagnosis of that case of wounded pride was correct.

It was near ten o'clock when the unwonted silence in Nos. 84 and 86, Leake House, caused the chamber-maid to rap at one door and then the other. No reply coming, she used her pass-key and found the bound and gagged detective. With a wild yell she started for the speaking tube and screamed to the clerk :

“ Oh, Wirra ! Wirra ! But ther's a murthered man kickin' fur the life on 'im ter get loose in 86, shure !” And covering her head with her apron, the servitor, fresh from the Emerald Isle, sank upon the floor and awaited developments.

Promptly came the clerk ; promptly Mr. Beagle was untied, and equally promptly he explained the situation to the clerk. Indeed, it was so over-fully done, that Falstaff's men in Lincoln green were not a corporal's guard to the armed throngs that had entered that window !

“ Yes ; that quiet looking Miles is head center of the most dangerous gang of counterfeitters and bank burglars in the country,” Captain Beagle closed his case to the astounded clerk. “ At the risk of my life I penetrated their den last night ; drugged the chief and would have captured him in the act to-day. But, somehow, they must have tumbled and followed him to his rooms ; for, when I waked, there were twenty pistols at my head and a pair of gigantic fellows sat upon me and sprung my own bracelets upon me !” And Captain Beagle held up his manacled hands ruefully.

“ Where are the keys ?” the clerk asked ; and, for the first time, both men realized that the detective's clothes were gone.

“ Ring up my office—261, ring three,” Beagle said, rather sheepishly. “ Call Cokely to telephone and say, ‘ Send patent key No. 5 to Leake House, quick.’ I'll wait here ;



and *mind!*—on your life!”—added the captive, “do not breathe one word of this. Captures of the greatest moment depend upon your secrecy.”

The clerk, swelling with the importance of his first criminal case, flew down to the telephone; and very promptly arrived a sub with the key. By irony of fate, it proved to be McTavish. Asking no questions, he stepped up to No. 84—unhappily known to him—and there beheld his chief *in vinculis!*

Beagle held out his hands mutely. McTavish unlocked the hand-cuffs and laid them on the bed. Not one word had passed; but then, McTavish, glancing into the other room, said briefly:

“Um! *You* lost him, too?”

“Get me some clothes and a hat; any kind, but hurry!” was the only answer Captain Beagle vouchsafed. And the inferior—closing the door with grave respect—paused in the hall to hold his sides, cram his handkerchief into his mouth, and finally rolled over and over upon the hall carpet in paroxysms of uncontrollable—but all the more painful because silent—laughter!





## CHAPTER XXXI.

## WITH HANDS BOUND.

But shrewdly as Tip Miles had laid his plans, he missed two points that were to turn them to naught ; and his trap, literally to ashes !

For, escaping from the Leake House, he had in vain sought Larry, with his note to Browne ; hoping still that the boy might not have obeyed instruction. But, failing all means to trace the young Tragedian, Miles fell back upon his usual philosophy. If Will *had* the note, he could not come ahead of the hour it named ; and, by that time, the game would be played ; the Coyote would be ripe for capture ; and Will's advent would aid, rather than disarrange, matters. On the other hand, if the boy had lost the note, none but Browne could understand it.

But, " It is the unexpected which happens ; " and now the proverb was verified, all unknown to Miles. For, as he walked toward the grocery, Juny had alighted from the train ; alone, but cool and brave, spite of the faster thumping of her heart.

She quietly asked the shortest route to Browne Beach farm. She had heard every detail of the place, for years, from Will's description ; but she had never been there, and the day's excursion had been planned to give her a first view of the place.

But, under what different circumstances !

Cresting the hill, away to the left, the girl saw the pretty gables of May Bower cottage ; but straight in front, as she crossed the short cut to the lane, showed the sloping red



sides of the old farm-house. Hastening her pace, Juny made straight for the little garden gate ; and reached the porch, panting more with exercise and excitement, than with fear at her strange and lonely mission.

Not a living creature was in sight about the farm, and, on the low porch, the silence grew oppressive to her. Narrow foot-paths ran along the sides of the house, half way back ; then they dipped abruptly to the water's edge, leaving its rear windows approachable only by the water.

Listening eagerly, Juny passed down one of these paths, weed-grown and unused. Stopped by the water, she tried the other, peering into the broken shutters and through the missing weather-boards, to see if any one was in the house. Not a sound did she hear ; only the distance-dulled whistle of the train that had brought her, now returning to town. Then bracing her courage up, Juny crept to the front porch and tried the crazy latch of the front door. It yielded, and she found herself in the mixed office and shop, from the further end of which rose the rickety stair. "Upstairs, back room," was the direction ever before the girl's brain ; and she closed the door behind her, crossed the room and ascended the stair. In the dead stillness she could hear the beating of her own heart ; but she took fresh courage at the thought of what might depend upon her success, and stood at last before the designated room. Her heart fluttered in her bosom as a frightened bird trying to beat out of its cage ; but she never hesitated.

"This *must* be the room ; but how—locked ! What could he mean by directing Will here to fool him !" In her eagerness the girl shook the lock fiercely ; but it held ; and, pausing for breath, she saw the hatchet.

"Oh ! if Will were *only* here !" she half sobbed ; but brave still—with nervous glance over her shoulder, she struck the point beneath the hasp and, with all her strength, forced



the staple. Slowly it yielded; then, with a sudden snap, that sounded in the stillness like a pistol shot. At the sound, and as the rough, heavy door slowly swung inward, Juny gave a stifled scream, dropped the hatchet and leaned trembling against the casing.

"Oh! Will!" she murmured. "*Won't* you come? Dear old Will!"

The room was empty; but the checkered sunlight from the diamond panes danced cheerfully upon the floor; and the girl recovered herself bravely:

"Shame, on you, Juny! You boasted to Will and to dad that you'd *die* for him; and here you are frightened at an empty house! Why you're worse than — Gus!"

Picking up the hatchet, Juny crossed to the fire-place, its great square tiles, once red, but now grey with age and dust. Under these lay the papers they all had sought! *She* was near their capture now! *She* would give them to Will; save her father and make Will's eyes speak to her plainly the secret she had already read in them.

Nerved with these thoughts, the girl stooped to the hearth; the door catching the chimney draught and creaking slowly shut. Again Juny shuddered and turned; again a hot flush at her own cowardice rose to her brow; and, dropping on her knees, she inserted the hatchet between the heavy tiles. One by one she moved them, using all her strength and blistering the small hands, lately unused to such work. At last a great lump jumped to her throat, and stood thumping there; and, almost dizzy with delight—she raised the dingy package of papers, closely folded and stained with age. She opened one sufficiently to see the signature, "Randolph Baylor," at the bottom! And still kneeling there, the girl raised her glorious face and clasped her hands, as she murmured:

"Thank God! he is saved this risk! *and by me!*"



Rising from her knees, no longer fearful now, but thankful, jubilant and proud, she turned toward the door, with the hatchet in one hand and the papers in the other. And as she stepped toward it, the heavy door that had just swung shut, opened wide; and in the opening stood Kyle Hardy!

With equal amaze, both recoiled and stared at each other; the color dropping out of Juny's cheeks and lips, as she recognized him and murmured inaudibly:

"Too late! Too late! *I am lost!*"

But the man spoke first; a gleam of ugly meaning passing over his face as he recognized the girl:

"Who the devil ——" he began. "*Oho!* By luck! The shiners' gal! Well, Juny, you *are* a slick one!"

The girl did not answer.

"Is there no escape?" she thought. "*Just* as I had succeeded, too! *Can* I not save them?"

"Well, my pretty miss, you got ahead of the Coyote once before! Oh! yes; you showed yesterday you remembered where we met. *We* need no introduction, Juny, do we? Well, *this* time pays well for the last; for you have saved me time, trouble and an even thousand dollars!"

Juny's white lips framed the words:

"—— What do you mean?"

"I mean, I'll thank you for those papers."

With one wild idea to save them, the girl dropped the hatchet, tore open her dress and thrust the papers into her bosom, as she drew back and said:

"I have no papers *of yours!*"

"We won't discuss proprietorship; but I want 'em all the same!" the man said mockingly. "*Oho!* *that's* the game, is it?" And he put his foot quickly on the hatchet, which Juny, reminded by its fall, had stooped to grasp. "Well, ye see it won't win! So fork out the papers.!"



The girl's courage rose with the danger.

"I'll give you nothing!" she said defiantly.

"You won't? Then I'll *take* them!" he cried; and seizing the girl roughly, the brute thrust his hand into her bosom.

Nerved by the touch, with flaming cheeks and the strength of desperation, Juny broke from him.

"Don't dare to touch me, Kyle Hardy!" she cried, standing erect before him with flashing eyes. "I'm only a girl—unarmed and in your power. *There!*" And she hurled the papers on the floor. "You villain! you *coward!*"

"We won't waste time exchanging compliments, Miss Baylor!" he answered mockingly.

"Let me pass, Kyle Hardy!" the girl said; but he got before her, whipping a short rope from his pocket.

"Let me pass, I say!" she repeated desperately, seeing his intent. "My father and Will Browne are coming here! I left word to say where I had come, *and for what!*"

"Then by luck! you've saved me again, Juny!" he cried, seizing her arm roughly. "They'll find you in this room, *waiting for them!*"

"Would you *murder* me?" the girl exclaimed, now terrified at his touch and struggling helplessly to get free.

"Oh, no!" he sneered. "Only keep you quiet, while I get off safely with *these!* Your pretty Will must be here soon, you say. Damn it! quit struggling; or, I *will* hurt you!" he ended brutally.

Then twisting the girl's arms, he passed the rope deftly about her elbows; knotting it and tying the end around her wrists.

In the struggle she had reached the door. Roughly he pushed her far into the room.

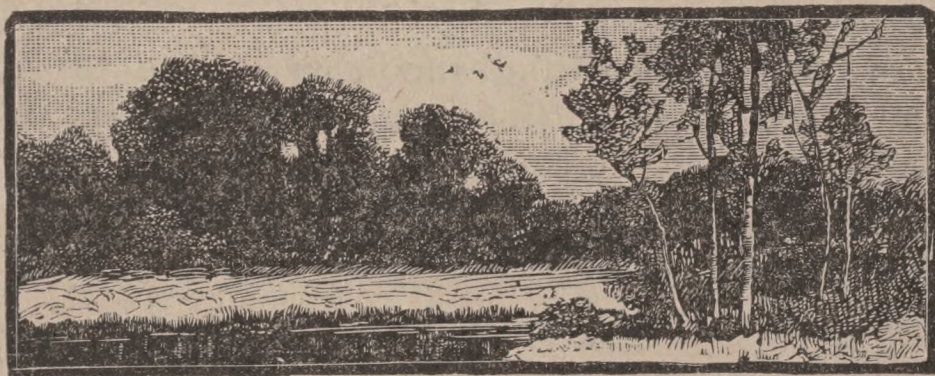
"There! Damn you!" he growled. "In with you and stay there till they come!" With a quick movement he



picked the hatchet from the floor ; pulled the broken hasp over the staple and drove the hatchet home, to hold it.

Juny had thrown herself heavily against the door. "Let me out! Help! Will! Dad! Help!" she screamed.

"They'll find you soon, Juny! *You* can afford to wait. *I* can not!" Hardy jeered. "By Jove!" he added, softly descending the stairs, "I *have* struck a breeze to-day! 'Unlucky in love?' Damn love! And now to dodge my precious pal, Tip Miles, Esquire!"





## CHAPTER XXXII.

## "TOUCHING HER OFF!"

When Kyle Hardy had fled from the women in his home, it was in dread lest their cries might summon an officer and detain him beyond the time he had fixed to start for the old farm-house and outwit Tip Miles—if he could.

But one idea dominated ; one living chance seemed left to him now—to get those forged vouchers back and sell them at Washington.

Have them he *would*, by fair means or foul ; even if he had to murder Miles, or—worse—to pay for them. The latter chance seemed wholly gone ; his exposure at the club and Lili's refusal to give up the only diamonds worth half the sum, leaving the money hopeless.

Desperate now—and with all the brute in his nature uppermost—the gambler slipped from his gate through the narrow, noisome alley between the streets. Entering the back door of a beer saloon, he seated himself at a table and ordered beer and sandwiches.

He had eaten nothing for many hours ; his nerves were shattered to the verge of mania, and the physical man, he felt, *must* have sustenance for the new trial it was to undergo.

Forcing himself to swallow the food and drink, Hardy listened for noises in the neighboring street ; but, hearing none, he passed out of the saloon, hailed a cab and was soon in the very same train that bore Juny to Browne Beach station. But, in different coaches, and each intent on avoiding notice, neither had seen the other on alighting.

Juny had stopped to inquire her way. Hardy, remembering the spot, struck straight for the old house, across



fields. But for a new ditch—deep and wide, which he was forced to double—the gambler would have reached the goal before her.

But now—with the papers in his breast and ugly triumph in his heart, that for the moment steadied his nerves—Hardy cautiously opened the front door and peered out. Quickly and softly he closed it.

For, coming down the shadowy lane, he saw Tip Miles; and with him, a lank sixfooter, in butternut pants, but innocent of coat or vest.

For Miles, sitting on the dry goods box at the post-office and reflecting on the uncertainty of events, thought of the special uncertainty of Beagle's arriving at Browne Beach at all; certainly in time to nab Kyle Hardy, during his two o'clock visit.

Violence was not Miles' game. He wanted to bag Hardy; not to wing him. And, even should Colonel Baylor and Browne stumble in at the same hour, he was determined to avoid a repetition of the Shiners' Gap episode.

Everything should be regular and artistic, this time; worthy of him who could scent out his shadower and leave him in his own bracelets. Still, legal aid *might* be needed; so he walked with the county constable, dinnerward bound; requesting him to be in easy reach of the farm-house porch at two o'clock, sharp.

Then Miles left the coatless constable; sauntered back to the old porch; and, seating himself on the rickety step, began to think. Gradually, the thoughts became spoken words, as he took out Captain Beagle's revolver and tested the hammer and cylinder.

"Wonder what hour Kyle will come," he thought aloud. "He'll come, sure; for he's red-hot set on those papers, to drug me for 'em. But he—didn't get 'em!" And he laughed low and enjoyably. "He *can't* be putting up any



job to get 'em without the money! If he *is*; why, old Jackpots hasn't forgot how to line a trey at twenty paces, any more than the Coyote."

He dropped the pistol on a distant sapling, sighting along the barrel; and Kyle Hardy, noiselessly slipping from the door behind, made one spring across the narrow porch and wrenched it from his hand.

"Be careful, Tip," he sneered at the thoroughly surprised Miles. "If you handle firearms so carelessly, you'll hurt yourself!"

"Damna ——" Miles checked the oath, half-forced from him by the shock; finishing coolly:

"Why, Kyle, what *do* you mean?"

"I mean business," Hardy answered roughly. "I mean I came ahead of time, because you were playing double! You've tried to trick me, Tip Miles, and failed! You wanted my money without my fingering those pretty little forgeries that cost me so much trouble!"

"Why, Kyle!" Miles answered, in seeming surprise, "I gave you the key; and the papers are safe in that room, now!"

"You lie! They are not!" Hardy retorted brutally.

Miles stared steadily at him a moment before he replied:

"Look here, Coyote; you're playing some card I don't see. Shake your sleeve and drop it 'fore I lay down to a bluff!"

And as he spoke, he sat upon the sill of the broken window, near the door, rolling a cigarette.

"Well, here's *my* hand," Hardy answered viciously. "I've seen *yours*; and I won't give you a red cent!"

Miles rolled his cigarette tighter, keeping his eye on Hardy's face. Then it went furtively toward the distant field, where the butternut breeches of the constable were growing colorless in distance.



"Needn't look for *him*!" Hardy answered the look he had intercepted. "The papers are *mine*!"

Miles struck a match and lit his cigarette as he answered:

"So they are, Kyle. So they are—when you get 'em!"

"Or, *now*; we'll say," Hardy answered, tapping the pistol. "I hold your age!"

"Why, so you do, Kyle!" Miles answered aloud; but he added to himself: "Curse my carelessness. But he never *shall* get them, if I lay this old barn in ashes!"

Then he rose from the window sill, saying:

"But, Kyle, ain't you ready to go upstairs, get your property and keep your word about the wealth?"

Kyle Hardy seemed to be listening for something, a moment; much to Miles' astonishment. Then he walked through the little gate, into the lane.

"Come along this way," he said. "Now, Tip Miles, *have* you been playing me for a sucker? *Did* you think I'd ante up a thousand useful dollars, for three pieces of paper, belonging to me, when I could get them without?"

Hardy was moving rapidly up the lane; Miles following, in no little wonder.

"Maybe you will get 'em, Kyle," he answered slowly.

"Maybe you've made me carry out one of Lady Lofty's pet plans, without waiting for orders. But what *is* your game, Coyote?"

"To win!" Hardy answered, stopping in the lane.

"You always did play too brash, Tip. Those papers *are mine*!"

"You think so, Kyle? Well, they *were* yours, safe enough, under the tiles in that upstairs room, where you will — *never get to now*!" And he looked back steadily, as he spoke.

"What's that, eh?" cried Hardy, following his gaze and pointing with the pistol.



"Only a little fire, Kyle! Don't look scared; you'll get used to fire, some day. That passageway is full of shavings; and, Coyote, the old barn is as rotten as your character!"

As he spoke, puffs of black smoke jetted through the broken window and the half-open door.

"Great God!" cried Hardy. "What *have* you done?"

"Put up one big bluff agin another, Kyle Hardy! I dropped the match in that passage. In ten minutes that house will be in ashes; and your papers are there!"

"Idiot!" yelled Hardy, dragging him back toward the house. "The papers are *here*; and you are a—*murderer*!"





## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## TO THE RESCUE.

For an instant, Tip Miles stood immovable in the lane. He could not believe the Coyote's words.

*Who* could have any interest in the old house?

How could Hardy possibly know if any one were really there? But something in the latter's face, an unusual expression of humanity, intensified by horror, admitted of no doubt.

"Speak truth, Coyote!" he cried, as they neared the porch. "*Is* any one there? Hark! What's that?"

They were nearly at the gate, when through the stillness rang a muffled shriek; the cry of a soul in agony! It came from the doomed house; for with it came little puffs and wreaths of smoke; and a dull glow, as of flames suppressed, peered through the window and the broken boards.

Then again the cry rang out; clearer, less muffled; now as though the caller caught the peril and fresh strength from knowledge of it!

"Help! Murder! Will!" could be distinguished; and in a woman's voice.

Both men were racing for the door; Miles' face set and fierce; the eyes glowing like coals, as the cry reached his ear and penetrated his sense.

"*Is she* there?" he asked through his set teeth.

"Yes! *Can* we reach the upper floor?"

Miles dashed open the front door. Masses of released smoke rolled out—dense, blinding, suffocating; and, as the men strove to breast it, yellow tongues of flame licked through it, forking above their heads.



"We can never reach her this way! The stairs burn! Is there *no* other?" Hardy gasped. Then, with livid face and eyes starting from their sockets, he again essayed the blazing passage.

But Miles dragged him back, screaming hoarsely:

"You're mad! The stairs burn! Yonder—that hay-rick—a ladder——"

Panting with exertion and the fierce heat, Hardy dashed for the rick at a rapid run; while Miles crept along the narrow path, in the blistering heat from the side of the house. Beating upon the hot boards, he shouted:

"Break the window, Juny! Kick out the sash!"

A dull, heavy beating answered from above; but the diamond-latticed sash was stronger than its age suggested; and again the muffled cry rang out—still more appealing in its agonized despair: "Dad! Will! Help me!"

Then the thuds redoubled; the sash trembled, yielded, and, bearing part of the frame, fell with a dull plash into the water below. In the opening leaned Juny; her face deadly white, her hair loose from the effort, her eyes horror-riveted upon the man below.

"Would you murder me?" she screamed. "Oh! Tip Miles, you *could* not! The floor is hot! The smoke chokes me! *Help!*"

"Courage, gal!" Miles shouted. "I'll save you—for your mother's eyes! Come to this window, just above."

"I can not," she gasped. "The door is locked!"

The man's heart stood still. He glanced at the rick; Hardy was almost there; but the heavy ladder would delay one man. He shouted back:

"You're safe for five minutes! Keep at the window; I'll be back in two minutes!" He hesitated, as little wreaths of smoke began to puff from the sill just below the girl. Then he cried: "Jump and swim! I'll save you!"



"I *dare* not!" the girl screamed back, despairingly. "You *know* my hands are tied!"

"One minute, then!" Miles shouted back, over his shoulder. He was already racing for the rick.

But even as he ran—with the girl's wild eyes still before him; her wild shriek still in his ears—the wonder rose *how* she got there? How could *she* have known? And then her tied hands! Could the Coyote — Then, like a flash, memory came back and forced out a great groan:

"My God! My note to Will!"

With whirling brain, he reached the rick; seized the long ladder Hardy was dragging, and rushed back, swinging it between them.

Then, with sickening sense, Miles felt they could never reach in time, with that weight. The fire gained rapidly; and already the draught from the opened window was eddying thick masses of smoke, cut by yellow flashes of flame, around the water gable!

It was too late!

Hid from the two men, by the smoke between; with parched lips and straining eyeballs, the horrified girl leaned heavily against the window, trying to pray. But the hot breath of the fire below drew hotter and closer round, almost choking her now and stifling even thought!

"Oh, God! *Can* he let me die so? Will, if you love me, come!" she murmured brokenly. "The floor burns me! That black water! I dare not jump with hands bound! Oh! God! Dad's dream! I said I'd die for him; they were *my* eyes he saw!"

Once again despair sent out its last wild wail:

"Dad! Save me——save me!"

As the agonized cry left her lips, Juny's hope half revived; for, round the wooded point beyond shot the small yacht, tacking direct for her. Through the whirling density of



smoke—its eddies lifting on the breeze, only to fall more black next instant—the girl's strained eyes recognized them all.

She even recalled a jest at Gus' hat and her amusement at Michael Angelo, so strangely do veriest trifles come into the greatest crises of our lives.

Just then it was that the party on the boat had caught sight of the fire. The helm changed; the boat ran off on the other tack.

"Oh! God! My prayer will not be answered! They do *not* see me! Lost! Lost!" groaned the half-crazed girl, dropping to her knees on the hot floor; thrusting her head far from the window to avoid the stifling heat.

Higher rose the flames, now freed from smothering smoke of chips and shavings and feeding on the dried sides of the house itself.

The front had already crumbled in; and, from the fields, Tip Miles could see the hideous pit of fire—yawning between him and that gable-end.

Suddenly, around that, too, licked the insatiate tongues of flame; and the man, struggling on with the ladder—three hundred yards away—dropped it with a groan, as the roof above that gable flamed out high—swayed one instant—tumbled into one seething mass of white-hot coals!



## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## THE VOICE ON THE WATER.

As Mrs. Beverly Baylor Browne had taken her seat in the carriage, her facial barometer had plainly marked "stormy!" and the persistent silence she maintained boded ominously for the gayety of the boating party under her chaperonage. Nor was Colonel Baylor in his usual good humor. Juny's whim was not pleasing to him, nor could he condone Will's share in the unusual escapade.

Still, hoping to find the reckless pair at the depot, he made careful scrutiny of the scattered groups; hoping, against hope, that they had missed the previous train.

He rejoined his party with best grace possible, saying:

"They will join us certainly at Blue Point station. Will knows that we take the yacht there; and sail up the Sound to the old farm-house wharf."

Mrs. Browne was silent; Gus pouting; and even the exuberant Evolutionist evolved no audible idea, until the train had whirled away from stuffy city air, into the balmy country breeze. Then, by it fortified, Michael Angelo remarked:

"To me the atomic structure of Miss Juniata Baylor's character seems somewhat peculiar, Mrs. Browne. She certainly combines an unusual share of reliant gentleness, with preponderant self-helpfulness, in a tone singularly blended into strong oppositions of texture. These are quite ——"

"*Quite!*" And Mrs. Browne's monosyllable was so cold, as to freeze the rest of the simile on Lake's tongue. "Brother Randolph, suppose we stop at May Bower station and see if



Juny has not stopped there, to anticipate our visit to the cottage?"

"Positively, no; we will go on to Blue Point!" The colonel had taken the reins again. "Juny has heard my wish that we should first visit the cottage together; she assuredly will respect it!"

"Perhaps," Mrs. Browne began; "but such unconven—"

"It is not a matter to be discussed," he answered shortly, "I am *sure*. We will meet them at Blue Point."

But the station-master at Blue Point had seen nothing of Will, whom he knew well; nor had any passenger stopped at the station that morning. A messenger had come from the Browne farm to have the yacht ready; and she was now floating at her stake.

"We shall, of course, go back to the Beach now?" Mrs. Browne sniffed, disdaining to sit on the bench in the station-room. "Wilmot and your daughter *must* be there."

"Wherever they are, Juny is perfectly safe with Will." There was a restlessness in the colonel's eye that belied his words; and a hot spot rose to his cheek as he added: "They can not expect our programme to change on their account. We were to *sail* up to the Beach; so sail we will."

They started for the water side, where a jaunty, sloop-rigged, miniature yacht danced at the steps; with everything thrown loose, ready to run up.

"Mr. Lake," the colonel said, as he hauled her alongside the step, "can you sail a boat?"

"No; absolutely, no!" the Evolutionist replied, with more directness than was his wont. "In theory, I understand, the changeful effects of wind-currents upon the resistant canvas; but, practically, I fear I should prove too inexpert to justify ——"

"Well, you can tend sail, I suppose," Colonel Baylor cut in. "That is not repugnant to art, is it?"



Michael Angelo glanced at his No. 6 tan gloves ; but before he could speak, Gus said cheerily :

"I can, Uncle Ran. I can sail her, too, if you'll let me. I think it's real crimp to know how !"

"Under some congenial conditions ——" Lake began.

"Get in !" Mrs. Browne spoke shortly.

The colonel had hoisted the sail, and the boat rocked restlessly in the fair breeze, dead-ahead. The Evolutionist obeyed gingerly ; Gus was already seated in the thwarts with the sail rope, and Mrs. Browne stepped in the stern.

It was not a cheerful party. The stiff breeze ahead caused long and frequent tacks ; and the colonel seemed wholly absorbed in managing the tiller and giving directions to Gus about the sail. He was bitterly disappointed in Juny's escapade, and not a little uneasy over her unaccountable mistake, as to time and place for the yacht party.

It was slow working up against the wind ; but, as they at last passed the point obstructing the view of Browne Beach, the old soldier's quick eye caught the puffs of smoke beginning to ascend from the red farm-house. For awhile he made no comment ; but, when certain of the fact, he said quietly : "Sister, the farm-house is on fire !"

"Indeed, it is ! How singular !" Mrs. Browne cried.

"It will burn like tinder. There's no saving it," the colonel said.

"Well, I'm sure it's rather a gain than a loss, brother," she answered, defending her pet plan. "It has saved you the cost of pulling it down——"

"Oh ! those flames *are* beautiful !" Gus cried, as the yellow tongues licked through the dull smoke, darting out and retracting as though alive. "Oh ! Uncle Ran ! it's worth a house to see anything so awfully crimp !"

"Why, you little Nero !" the colonel answered. "It's plain to see you are not a property-holder."



"I have often noted," Mr. Lake said, breaking a long and futile silence, "that flame individually and intrinsically is *not* beautiful. But it is noteworthy that conflagrations, in some sort, indemnify us for Nature's outrageous misuse of color in so many spontaneous instances. The wavy masses of dun, neutral background, picked out with saffron and crimson, give artistically contrasted tones. Indeed, they almost compensate for those gross oppositions of green and red in the field lily; the intensity of horror in a deep blue sky over a raw green sward. Yes, Miss Gustine, it is pleasant to know that, in its relations to evolution of effect in Art, even destruction has its compensations!"

"It is pleasant to know," the colonel added, "that in ordinary cases it has the more practical compensation of insurance!"

"Which we could not effect on the Beach property," Mrs. Browne finished. "But, I repeat, brother Randolph, that the fire *here* is an economy!"

"Doubtless!" Colonel Baylor answered briefly; and again his mind went back to Juny and the wonder at her strange freak, and its stranger abetting by Will.

"The fire will spoil our landing, won't it, Uncle?" Gus queried.

"Yes; there is no step, save at the old house;" her mother said, "and if we land along the beach below, there is no road across the fields to the cottage."

"We'll tack in one stretch nearer," the colonel decided, "and then sail back to Blue Point. The children *must* be there, ere now; and, seeing the fire, will naturally expect us back."

The boat was put about; wearing up slowly toward the scene of the fire. Then, as the smoke rolled upward on the wind, Gus cried: "See! Uncle Ran! The fire is attracting people. Two men are racing with a ladder!"



"What for?" Mrs. Browne asked shortly. "There is nothing to save. The house is empty and a good riddance, I'm sure!"

"There come two more, racing along the beach," Gus answered. "A big man and a little one. Why, the big one looks like Will ——"

"Augustine! Please be rational!" Mrs. Browne said. "How *could* Will be running to a country fire and leaving Juniata by herself? It would be too unconventional, even for her!"

"Yes, you are right," the colonel replied, glancing at the runners. "The one in his shirt sleeves does look like Will though, at this distance."

"Ah! There! See the wonderful oppositions of background and flexible flame-tints!" broke in Lake, as the smoke lifted and the yellow glow wrapped the water gable of the house. "The cloud masses seem to typify gloom, doubt, despair! But the flame-lambents shoot into effort, aspiration, triumph ——"

"My God! What's that?"

The colonel's voice rang out clear, low, but in horrified accents. For, as the wind whirled the smoke-clouds high above their heads, it bore to his quick ear, faint and dim, the echo:

*"Help, Dad! Help!"*

"What do you mean, brother?" Mrs. Browne stared at the pale face and strained eyes, fixed upon the house, now again enveloped in smoke.

But Gus leaned forward now; her face blanched, her lips apart. For again the wind-flaw lifted the smoke-clouds, trailing them out like a pall toward the boat. And again it bore upon it—faint still, but more distinct—the low, despairing wail:

*"Help! Dad! Save me!"*



Colonel Baylor's eyes met the girl's. In them, he read confirmation of his first terrible, paralyzing dread. Then the old soldier rose supreme. With a bound he was at the sail, throwing loose the rope; next instant, as the canvas rattled down—still bellying in the breeze—he grasped the mast, unstepped it and threw it overboard; and, with the same motion, reached for the oars and drew them from beneath the seats.

"Can you row?" he said huskily to Lake; and the latter helplessly grasped the proffered sweep.

With a gesture of contempt, Gus pushed him aside, almost throwing him out of the frail craft, seized the oar and tore off her long gloves.

And, stranger still; without one word, but with ashen face and gleaming eyes, Mrs. Browne twisted herself about, seized the tiller like an expert, and whispered in horror-curdled tones:

"Pull! For God's sake! *pull!* *She is there!*"





## CHAPTER XXXV.

### "INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH!"

Wrapped in pall-like wreaths of smoke, sickened by parching heat upon her face—dizzy—desperate—Juny stretched out after the little air left her.

She could not see the change in the boat's crew and in its course. She only knew that the white sail—her sole reliance—the very "Rock of Ages" for her clinging hope—had disappeared.

She did *not* know that the wild, despairing cry she sent out after it struck other ears and nearer, more possible of aid to her peril. For Will Browne, dashing along the very path she had come, saw the burning house from the distance.

From the station, he took the cut across fields; a vague, but strong oppression—which he could neither shake off nor account for—urging him to haste.

He knew Juny had gone to danger; he knew the desperate nature of the men she might chance to meet. For, while Miles' note puzzled him greatly, it might be only a trap. If so, she had walked directly into it. So, troubled with these thoughts, he hastened along the narrow path with stride that taxed Larry's shorter legs to the tribute of a dog-trot.

Suddenly the latter cried:

"Sa-ay, Cap'n! That 'ere barn's a-fire!"

And Will—giving one swift glance toward the house—started for it in a wild rush; while Larry, now at home and on even terms with longer legs, braced his hands on his chest and struck into a swinging run that easily kept up with the man's best stride.



On both rushed, till the turn of the path brought them nearly opposite the water-gable of the house; flame and smoke wrapping it, like a graceful mantle toyed with by the flailing wind. And out of flame and smoke and falling brand—striking their ears with the same dread meaning that had fallen upon those of the water-party—came the wailing shriek:

“Help, Dad! Save me!”

For one single instant Will Browne halted; pushing back the damp hair from his brow, staggering as though the sound had struck him like a bullet. Only one instant! The next, filling his lungs in a great gasp, he dashed forward again; every muscle strained; every nerve at dire tension!

But Larry never paused. Skimming the ground with the lightness, almost the fleetness, of a greyhound, his out-door training and bare feet told in the long race; while Will's wound told heavily against him. Ere he had struck the dividing fence, fifty yards from the house, Larry had vaulted over, crossed the narrow spit of ground and hailed the window:

“Hi!” he cried. “Are yer there, gal? Anser!”

A flaw of wind divided the smoke, and Juny's ghost-like face, drawn with fear and horror, looked down upon the boy.

“Jump! Ye're saved! Jump *quick*!” he yelled.

“I *dare* not!” came the wail. “My hands are tied!”

“Jump, I say! Darn yer hands! Jump!” yelled Larry, in stentorian tones.

And, borne on the wind, they crossed the water; falling like balm upon strained ears in that boat, where Gus, with blistered hands but sturdy will, held her own against her uncle's oar.

And the boat, lightened of its sail, was gliding on; spurning foam from her bow and leaving a silver-bubbled wake behind. But it was still three hundred yards away, when



the boy's ringing voice crossed the sad waves, with message of such cheer!

*Some one* was there, the laboring rowers knew. And then rang out a new voice; as Will Browne, vaulting the fence behind him, caught the boy's cry and echoed it:

"Jump, Juny! Jump! Will is here!"

As he so screamed—still forty yards away—the crazy gable seemed to reel and rock; then to shoot upward in the air!

A whirling swoop of sparks and fiery brands, with hungry tongues of flame, circled round and round, high-spired above the roof!

Then, when it died and fell, the sickening watchers in the boat; the racing man upon the shore; all saw—as Miles had seen, when he groaned and hid his face—that the gable had fallen in and only left a roaring, crackling maw of coals and flame and lurid smoke.

But—just in time; with not a second to spare—the girl had hurled herself through the air; clave the dark water and disappeared. And, at the same instant, a loud splash showed where Larry had plunged after her.

And Will Browne—half-crazed, but never slacking speed—was at the bank; plunged in amid *debris* and burning rafters, just in time to see the boy's head reappear above the surface. Then Will struck out to where the boy floated himself with one hand; while on his other arm rested the pallid face of the rescued girl; the eyes closed and the long fair hair floating upon the water.

"Shove along that 'ere plank!" Larry shouted, squirting a great stream from his mouth; and, as Will guided the charred timber nearer, the boy seized it; lifting himself higher.

"Swim roun' an' liff her, Cap'n," he said, puffing. "She's solid, bet yer Boyntons!"



Without a word—with thanksgiving in his heart, too deep for words—Will obeyed the boy's directions. A few more strokes; and their feet struck the shelving bank. Between them, they bore the unconscious girl to the grass; cut the rope from her arms and laid her gently down, just as the old house crumbled in, with a dull, groaning sound.

And Larry, looking up with dripping hair, but glowing face, exclaimed:

“Warn’t it *boss*, Cap’n? Jest as perfec’ as ef we’d ’a rehearsed fur a month! Not a minit ter spare, nuther; but it did jest beat the fire scene at t’ Bowery—all ter smash, yer kin critter-size!”





## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## COMING TOGETHER.

When Tip Miles and Kyle Hardy saw the gable tumble into the fiery maw of the furnace beneath it, both men dropped the ladder, standing still and staring at it, horrified, dazed !

Then, suddenly Miles sprang at the other, gripping his throat and shaking the larger and heavier man in his fierce wrath.

“ *Was she there? Answer, you devil!*” he screamed ; suddenly pausing and slowly releasing his grasp. For Hardy made no effort ; and the eyes, close to his own, stared into them with vacant idiocy ; and a dull, meaningless laugh was all the answer his violence wrung from the gambler’s thoughts. Constant strain on them, aided by constant use of brandy, had culminated in the horror of that hour ; and Hardy’s nervous system had given way, bringing him to the very verge of mania.

Wasting no second glance, Miles threw the jibbering creature from him, and flew toward the now crumbling mass of fire, as fast as feet could carry him. But sickening horror almost numbed the power of motion, as he felt he was too late !

If the girl had remained in the house, she must have perished horribly in the ruins. If she had jumped, her hands were tied ! And those thoughts rising, as he ran ; the hideous scene was plain before him and the tough old sinner stopped still ; covering his face with his hands, to shut it out. Then, coercing himself to effort, he ran on again ; turned



the curve in the path and saw Larry and Will, stooping over the inanimate girl.

Rushing to them, he threw off his coat, wrapping it around the drenched form ; and, as he knelt to do it, something very like a prayer of thankfulness rose from his heart, but was only a growl when it reached his lips.

"No time to lose !" he cried to Will. "We must get her to the cottage quick as possible. Plenty of dry clothes in the bedroom ; big fire, ready to light — Ha ! What is that ?"

His quick eye caught the yacht, rocking on the waves and drifting undirected ; and Will's glance, directed by his, instantly took in the situation.

"Great heaven ! That's my mother and sister !" he cried. "Uncle must have one of his attacks !"

"They are safe enough," Miles answered quietly. All his coolness had returned, on seeing Juny safe. "You and the kid get the gal to the cottage. I've a punt in the rushes, here ; I'll row out and bring *them* in."

He ran down the shore, floated his punt, and sculled briskly for the yacht ; but he yelled back to shore :

"Hurry that gal into dry clothes ! I'll carry the good news to her dad !"

And the strange rescuer was none too soon ; as it showed when he neared the drifting boat. For, when the gable of the old house had crumbled in and disappeared in a whirling spiral of sparks and flame, Colonel Baylor's back was turned on that awful sight. But as he rose to his stroke, his eye caught his sister's face ; ashen, wide-eyed, with horror frozen in its every line, as she stared over his shoulder. Wrenching his body round, he saw that the house had tumbled ; and, with one deep gasp, fell forward, insensible.

The boat veered round, with Gus' strong stroke, showing *her* the hideous scene that had struck her uncle down. But



it showed her, too, a man springing from the bank, and other figures moving in the water ; and, fascinated with horror, she saw, a moment later, the three land upon the bank. Then Gus came out strong.

"Sit still, mamma !" she cried. "Don't move, Mr. Lake, or we'll be over !" Then carefully reaching the prostrate man, she raised his head and laid him across the seat, wetting his wrists and temples and feeling the beating of his heart.

After a few moments he revived somewhat ; opening his eyes, but closing them quickly with a shudder.

"She's safe ! Juny's safe ! Uncle Ran !" she called in his ear. "She's all right ! Will saved her from the water !"

Gradually the iteration fastened on his stunned sense, and, as Colonel Baylor opened his eyes once more, a joy unspeakable crept into them.

"O ! God ! You are merciful !" he murmured faintly. "Help me up, Gus. Are you—*sure* ?"

And Gus, with his head resting on her shoulder, pointed beyond the still-flaming ruins to where Juny had risen to her feet, between her two preservers.

Meantime, the boat was drifting out with the ebb tide ; and Gus saw she must get her crew ashore. She turned to Michael Angelo, sitting curled in helpless misery in the bow.

"Can't you *try* and row ?" she asked him, in a tone, where obsecration struggled with contempt: "It's just the easiest thing, and awfully crimp to know !"

"I can *try* !" replied the desperate Evolutionist.

Tearing off his gloves, he seized the proffered oar ; put all his muscle and all his mind upon it ; and pulled two surprisingly vigorous strokes. Unhappily, they were as rapid as vigorous ; and the second sprawled him on his back in the bottom of the boat, his feet skyward ; while the dragging oar, crab-caught, swerved the light craft and nearly upset her. Reaching the oar, Gus steadied the boat ; trying to put



her head to the tide and row against it to the shore. But her hands were blistered and her breath came short and fast. Then, to her delight, she saw the little boat shoot from the willows; propelled by vigorous arms, straight for the yacht. Next instant she recognized the rower, crying:

"Mamma! Look! It's the manager!"

No added delight showed Mrs. Browne; but she was so dead beat by the excitements of that day, that she never spoke, scarce even looked her scorn, as Miles drew alongside, stepped lightly into the yacht; and, seizing the two oars, pulled strongly for shore, with the brief remark:

"I'll pull her in!"

Once landed, Miles took command of the party; Mrs. Browne's horror-shattered power of resistance yielding to the strongly-asserted will.

"Here! Take hold and help the colonel!" he said bluntly to Lake, after one comprehensive stare at his wonderful make-up. And soon, at the cottage, the old man was in Juny's arms.

"Oh! Dad! Dad! Heaven has been good to us!" she cried, hanging round his neck, with tears of joyous gratitude rolling down her cheeks. "How *can* I ever be thankful enough! When I lost your sail, I lost all hope! I never dreamed we should meet on earth again."

"We are ever in His hand, my daughter," the old soldier answered, his own cheeks wet. "When I saw that roof fall, and believed you were beneath it, heaven was merciful to send me unconsciousness." He held her closer to him, his eyes raised in silent thanksgiving, ere he added: "But I have you still, my darling! *My daughter!*"

And at these words, Mr. Tip Miles turned away abruptly and blew his nose like a fog-horn.

While restoratives were used and rest sought by the others of the party, Will Browne—dried in the kitchen and refreshed



by a rousing toddy, shared quite fairly by Larry—waited impatiently to interview Miles.

That worthy's sudden appearance and friendly aid had not been commented on, in the hurry of events; nor had his rush to rescue the yacht seemed to Will unnatural. But what he could not account for was the man's address, as of old acquaintance, to his mother and sister, and their natural acceptance of it.

"Say, Gus," he whispered, detaining her in the hall, "your patent life-preserver there seems to have captured you and mamma."

"Oh! *I* think he's just crimp!" the girl answered, following her mother upstairs. "I always have!"

"Always?" Will's eyes opened wide in amaze.

"Yes; always," she threw down in a whisper—"That is, ever since mamma made him manager of the farm!"





## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## A MOTHER'S PICTURE.

In the quaint, old-time parlor of May Bower cottage, Will Browne paced restlessly ; trying to recall to his mind the sequence of events for the past few hours. And, with the effort, ever recurred a gush of thankfulness for Juny's safety that dominated all else.

Quickly recovering, she had insisted on walking to the cottage ; assisted slightly by Will and Larry, on either hand, as the trio moved up the lane.

At the house, Will's knowledge of closets and presses was quickly utilized ; and Juny soon found piles of old-fashioned belongings of female wardrobe, sufficient for several boarding-school outfits. And, while she had changed her wet garments, Larry had built a huge fire in the kitchen ; whereat Will and he dried theirs in camp fashion.

While so employed, Tip Miles strode into the room, with the salutation to Larry :

"Get outside, kid ! Sun's healthier !" Then, turning to Will, he said : "So you got my note ? Thank God !"

For a full half-hour the two men were closeted together ; then, as Miles stepped out into the red-glowing sunset, he beckoned to Larry and said to Will :

"I'd better take the boy with me and send a warning, if I see my chance to make the trip !"

And, thus left alone, the cavalryman walked post in the parlor. Suddenly, he stopped and listened.

A light step on the stair ; and Juny ran into the room, holding both hands out to him :



"Oh ! *Can* I ever thank you enough, you dear, brave old Will?"

"Yes ; and a vast deal too much," he answered rather sheepishly ; but not forgetting to take and hold her hands.

"*I'm* not the one to thank. But, Juny, it *was* terribly close ; and that little hero, Larry, was *just* in time !"

The girl shuddered ; drawing closer to him :

"It *was* terrible, Will ! The slow-creeping flames, the black water below ! My bound hands !" Her face changed brightly. "And that dear little Larry would *not* be thanked. Only said it was all in his line ; he did sensation for benefits !"

"But you are safe now, dear little girl ! And uncle's odd wishes about the cottage standing just as it was have turned out well. How becoming that old lace dress is !"

"And this strange, pretty shawl Gus wrapped me in, for fear of cold," the girl answered.

"A Mexican *mantilla* uncle gave his wife. She used to wear it with that very dress ! You know *her* room stands just as she left it, to go to New Orleans."

"How singular !" Juny said gravely. "And dad is so devoted to her memory ! Tell me more about her, Will."

"Let her speak for herself, Juny," the man answered ; and, stepping to the alcove between the windows, he drew the heavy curtain from a full-length picture. "That is *her* portrait ; always draped, since uncle returned to the cottage without her."

The girl gazed on the canvas, with mounting color and lips apart. Long silent, she cried at last :

"What a lovely, peaceful face ! O ! Will, something in it draws me resistlessly to her. How different *I* might have been, had I ever called one like her—*Mother* !"

"Different, Juny !" Will cried. "Who would wish you so ?"



"Oh! Will, I boasted to you—to dad—that I was brave; that I'd give my life *for him*! But when danger came—when the flames stretched hot hands for me—Will, I was only a girl! I was *afraid*!"

"And *I* was away!" The man spoke impulsively; and, of course, inconsequently. "*You* were in danger and I was ass enough not to be in danger, too!"

"But you came to me," she said, very gently.

"Yes; after the boy did! Oh! how can you ever forgive me, Juny!"

"*Forgive*, Will? You, my best friend!"

Somehow, he had both her hands again. The color rose high in her cheeks; but she did not withdraw them.

"Friends!" he exclaimed. "*What* is friendship?"

The girl dropped her eyes. Her voice would shake, as she tried to answer saucily: "I'm not good at conundrums, Will. Somebody said it was 'love without wings'!"

"And may ours — take wings?"

"What! And fly away, Will?"

"Yes, Juny; to be replaced by—love! Look in my eyes, darling! Tell me; *do* you care for me?"

Slowly, but bravely, she raised her face to him.

"Why *tell* it, Will? You know I do!"

"You really *love* me?"

"Ever since that night at Shiners' Gap," she answered softly; her eyes dropped again. "The whole heart of the wild, untutored child went out to you then; and since, she has never called it back again. Yes, Will," she went on gently, as he drew her to his breast; "Yes; I am yours now! But my heart is so full of love, of gratitude! Let me kneel before her, who was dad's wife, and thank Him who is the orphan's Father!"

"Yes, Juny, darling! The impulse of your pure girl-heart proves you tender, as you are brave and beautiful!"



He turned to the window ; the girl dropping on her knees before the picture. To him the quick changes of the past two days seemed scarcely real ; rather the baseless fabric of a dream. But, through the still, peaceful sunset falling on the distant Sound, curled the blue smoke of the smouldering ruins, to prove their strange reality. Turning to the girl, now rising slowly from her knees, he cried :

"One thing, above all, is real, darling ! You love me !" And his lips met hers with lingering pressure ; cut short, as both heard suddenly :

"*A—hem !* Perceed, Cap'n ! It's kerect ; yer may oscurate !" And Larry stepped in the window from the lawn. "Don't yer min' *me*. Oh ! I've been there ; *I've* played th' lovyer's part. Don't make no mistake ; *I* ain't proud 'cos I'm leadin' man, and takes my benefits !"

"By the way, Larry," Will said, not without some blushes, "playing hero here has postponed your benefit at the Grand, to-night."

"Greens ! That ain't nuthin' !" the boy answered. "Yer may jest combine ef that 'ere *ben.* wasn't goin' ter be a dead frost anyway ! *I* don' care. Ef *I* fails in th' leggit-termit, wy I'll go in comic opperrer ! An' then, wen I can't git no mo' singers ter howl on credit, wy I'll h'open an agency !"

"Do you really want to be an actor ?" Juny asked.

"If so," Will added, "I'll educate you, and we'll get you an opening in a first-class theater."

"Ye're mity good, Cap'n ; and yer kin jest bet yer pile Hi thank ye ! But they don't make 'em *that way* ! No, *sir-r-r* ! *I* want ter play th' leggit-termit in the country ; try her on the dog, wid *one* supe fur both armies an' six dollars at th' door ! Then, nex' day, I'll retire ter my dormy, fake my pie-box an' loll fur th' puffer !"

"Do *what* ?" asked Juny, staring at him.



"Go t' m' hotel, pack m' trunk, hunt de station an' wait fur a freight train!" cried Larry warmly. "*That's* wot makes yer leggittermits! Wy, any kid kin play ye' sassie-tee come-dee! But its hadwersity wot chips yer a chirping heavy, able ter sling a howlin' Hamlit! But, say! I'm furgittin' my messidge from th' ole 'un. He says, ye keep yer teeth sharp, 'cos Kiotys is dang'rus, till theirn's pulled!"

"Another favor you've done us, Larry," Juny said, as Will sat at a table and hastily wrote a few lines. "Now, *won't* you let me do something for you?"

"I *will*; yer may nominate!" the boy answered. "Yer may inwite me ter th' wedd'n! *Can't* I see thro' a millstone wid a hole 'n't? *Can't* I smell h'orange blossums in der hair?"

"Here, Larry," Will said, hastening forward to spare Juny's confusion. "Here's another fiver job for you. Take the next train and give this note to Captain Beagle. If there's an answer, meet us at the city station at 8:00 o'clock."

"Kerect, Cap'n. That 'ere dertective 'll git this note, *too-der-sweet!* Say"—he added, nodding toward Juny—"That's all sot, eh? Well, I know'd it! *Can't* I feel simtums of a gilt-edged nupshurl hannounce-ment! *Can't* I hear them newspaper beats a-hollerin'—'Yere's yer weddin' in 'igh life! Full descripshin o' th' dresses!' Good bye, Miss! Good bye, Cap'n! Hi'm off!" And Larry bounded through the window and raced for the lane.

"The note was only to warn Beagle, my darling," Will said, passing his arm round Juny. "The Coyote *may* escape Miles, and Beagle knows his lair!"

He stooped and pressed his lips upon the girl's; and, as he did, the evening breeze brought to their ears the distance-mellowed cry:

"*Yere's* yer wedd'n in 'igh life! *Yere's* yer latest diworce! Honly five cents!"



## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## ANOTHER LITTLE GAME.

When Miles left Will Browne at the cottage, his sole idea was to find the Coyote and fasten proof upon him, by his own confession of past villainies.

That the forged papers, though harmless now, were in Hardy's hands, Juny's story proved ; but the rapid culmination of events, within the past few hours ; the strange collection of all the parties at May Bower cottage ; his own forced exposure of himself—and partially of his plans—to Will Browne ; all these demanded rapid climax to that sensational drama, of which he had been acting-manager for months.

"I *must* get the Coyote dead-to-rights," he said to himself, as he strode rapidly up the lane ; "and darned quick, too ! And it must be done out of his own mouth, some way !"

As if in echo to his wish, Hardy appeared at the turn before him ; sitting moodily and feebly against a tree, with his head buried in his arms. As Miles approached, the gambler looked up ; haggard, ashen face, bloodshot eyes and drawn lips telling of the fierce struggle passed through his brain. But the first words he spoke, though still showing nervous horror, proved that his mind had shaken off its delusion and was once more clear.

"My God ! Tip," he cried. "How *can* you keep so calm and move round, as if ——" he hesitated ; the shudder again shaking him—"if nothing had happened ! Haven't you *any* nerves ?"

"I don't know about that," Miles answered. "But I do know that I—that *we both* are in a bad box."



"*Hush!*" the other whispered nervously, giving an effortful glance over his shoulder. "Hush! I seem to hear *it* all the time! I can hear that gal's voice now, praying me to let her loose! But, Tip," he added hoarsely, shuddering again—"you *know* I did not mean to murder! You know it! I didn't do it. I didn't kill her! You set the match—you *know* I tried to bring the ladder!" And the man groaned; again covering his face.

"I know it," Miles answered soothingly. "I'm more to blame than you. Brace up, man! If you go on that way, you'll get the shakes. Here, try a drop of this on your nerves," and Tip Miles pulled out a flask of Colonel Baylor's brandy, and, taking a small pull himself, passed it to Hardy.

"Say, Coyote," he added, as the other gulped mouthful after mouthful of the raw liquor, "there ain't no chloral in *that!*"

The gambler's dull eye lit into a gleam of intelligence, as he turned it on the other; and the stimulant of the liquor seemed to run through him.

"That's past," he said sullenly, drawing a full deep breath. "It was a fair deal and I won. You'd have done me the same, in my place."

"Correct!" Miles answered, as they walked on together. "Let bygones be bygones! I don't hold any grudge."

"And we're in the same boat, now," Hardy answered; the liquor waking up his intellect, numbed by overstrain and overindulgence. "Say, we'll have to get out of this, 'fore the hue-an'-cry comes. It can't be long. They'll miss the gal, whatever chance it was brought her here!" And again he shuddered, covering his face.

"Yes; we're in the same boat," Miles answered. "So brace up, Kyle. I guess I'm more responsible for that girl's life than you are. But what to do is the question."



"Get out of this, some way," Hardy answered, with a glance over his shoulder at the smouldering ruins. "We must cut and lay low somewhere West—and forget *that*! Give me some brandy."

"I'm with you," Miles answered cheerily. "But we can't go back to the city in daylight. Might lay low at the cottage yonder; only I'm expecting old Baylor and his sister down——"

"What!" screamed Hardy in amaze. "*You* expect them *here*? And to talk about it like that!"

"Well, Kyle," Miles answered with aggravating coolness, "one of us *ought* to keep his nerves, you know. What are you shaking about, man? Take some brandy."

"Baylor coming *here*!" Hardy repeated. "Then he's sure to find out——"

Again he finished with a wild, shuddering glance at the fiery remains of the house.

"*Perhaps* he may," Miles replied. "*Perhaps* there's one way"—and he spoke very slowly—"to prevent his taking the news back to town!"

"What do you mean?" gasped Hardy.

"Nothing—if you're too dull to translate," Miles answered. "*I've* nothing against the man. *You* say you have an old score to settle. I *know* he'll be at that cottage at sunset; and *I* know the way into it——"

Hardy stopped under the spreading trees and stared at Miles, wondering; passing his hand across his brow in a dazed way.

"If I thought it *possible*—if I *dared*"—he muttered. Then, with the ugly light coming back into his eyes, he asked abruptly: "Can you get me into the cottage? So I'll meet this Baylor *just once more*?"

"I said so," Miles replied. "But mind, Kyle, there's to be no violence——"



A hard, wild laugh from the gambler broke in on his speech.

"You *are* a slick one, Tip!" he said. "You're a perfect preacher for pointing the evil way and giving good advice—Violence!" and the desperate ruffian seemed his worst self again. "Oh, no! Tip; no *violence*! I'll be as gentle as a woman with that high-bred, old Virginia gentleman! *Curse* him! He's been my rock-a-head all my life; and I just want to meet him once more. Violence! Oh, no! Tip!" and again the ugly laugh rang out.

"Say, Kyle! your nerves are pretty well strung, I guess," Miles said. "I really didn't think roasting one girl——"

"Damnation! Shut your mouth!" Hardy cried, turning fiercely to him; yet letting one furtive glance steal out to those smouldering embers. "I believe you *want* to drive me crazy with your jaw. Come along! Get me into that house. Let me meet Randolph Baylor *once*—and *we'll go West to-night!*"

Miles stood silent a moment, calculating his chances in the desperate game to trick the other. Did he let him escape now, another long chase would follow, for no result. He could not arrest him with the forged papers on him, without ugly inquiry into the fire; and, most important, the main fact of all his effort to prove, by Hardy's own lips, he could not reach by arrest for forgery alone.

"I'll *do* it!" he said suddenly. "Come on, Kyle, but your nerves are a little shaky. Try a nip." And, with a light touch of the brandy himself, he again proffered the flask to Hardy. The latter drained it; shook himself with the sullen growl of a bull at bay; and drew from his pocket the pistol he had taken from Miles.

"Say, Kyle! That's mine," the other said. "I'm not going into that house unarmed. You've a barker?"



"I don't want the damned thing," Hardy answered. "It talks too loud. *This* is sure and silent!" And tossing the pistol contemptuously to Miles, he showed the handle of a knife above his vest. "Come on! let's get inside," he added with a shudder, as his eyes again wandered to the smoking pile. "It's getting cold out here!"

They turned toward the cottage, and a rapid walk brought them to the heavily-massed shrubs beneath the parlor windows.

"We'll get in here and wait for him," Miles whispered. "Let me go first and reconnoitre. If all's safe, I'll whistle."

As he turned away, Hardy seized him so fiercely by the shoulder that Miles instinctively grasped the pistol in his breast.

"Look here, Tip Miles!" the other said, in a hoarse whisper. "If you're trying to trick me now, I'll slit—*Ho! ho! ho!*"—he interrupted himself with a blood-curdling laugh—"Why you *dare* n't. *You're* deeper in than I am! You touched off the old barn! You——"

"*Murdered* the girl? Say it, Kyle," Miles said, looking full in his eyes. "Why don't you?"

"*S-sh!* for God's sake!" the other groaned, with a shudder. "No! You *dare* not. I'm a fool!"

"I believe you are," Miles answered roughly, shaking off Hardy's grasp. "I'll take back my offer. Come, let's get to town and escape!"

"*Never!*" the other growled through his set teeth. "I'm too near now to miss him this time! Besides, the papers are worth more with him out of the way."

Miles looked fixedly at him a moment in silence. Then he said: "Well! *You'll do!*"

The next instant he had entered the window of the cottage.



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## KNOTTING THE THREADS.

"You got my message?" Miles said, as Wilmot Browne advanced anxiously to meet him. "Well, he's there! Lay low; and warn the gal to keep herself and the others out of sight, until you signal. Got a pistol? That's all right. I think *I* can manage him; but two shots are better than one. He's a real dangerous beast; and he's half-crazy besides. Get behind that curtain; and, *mind!* don't shoot, unless he fixes me!"

"I pledge you my word," Will answered.

He stepped into the alcove; and Miles—leaning from the window, with the purpling reflections of the sunset lighting his grizzled head—whistled the low signal.

Hardy cautiously left the shrubbery and stepped into the window.

"So the coast's clear?" he growled. "Curse this stealing into a house like a sneak-thief!"

"You're very squeamish, I know; but you'll get used to it," Miles answered, speaking very low, but very distinctly. "I thought a dash at burglary might stimulate your nerves, after forgery—child-stealing—arson—"

"Hush!" Hardy broke in nervously. "You know I'm no soft, 'Tip; but I *can't* forget that girl's cries; nor her eyes, when she pleaded with me not to tie her!"

"Nor me, neither, Kyle," Mr. Miles returned consolingly. "You see, *I* don't mind a little arson; but then, this girl-roasting——"

"Hush! *Hush*, I say!" cried Hardy hoarsely, holding up his hands and staring blankly at Miles. "Curse me!"



Tip, if I can make you out to-day ! That girl's death doesn't seem to faze *your* nerves !”

Hardy approached the table, where Miles had seated himself, and stared across it. Again a dull, suspicious gleam rose to his eyes ; and his hand nervously went to his breast. Again it faded, as he added pleadingly :

“Tip, you *will* stand by me? We'll have a final settlement with this Baylor ——”

“Yes, Kyle Hardy, we'll have a final settlement—*in full!*” And the older man looked across that narrow table, with his elbow resting on it. But in the hand that dropped beneath its edge gleamed the firmly-gripped revolver.

“Yes, Kyle, we've run together some nine years ; and, all that while, you've played me for the Jack of Fools !”

“Well, perhaps I did, Mr. Jackpot Miles.”

“And all the while,” Miles went on slowly, “I've played *you* for a bigger fool than I was.”

“Pshaw ! We're in the same boat,” Hardy answered sullenly. “We won't quarrel about words.”

“Nor about *facts*. Why, man, I was complimenting you. If not a fool, you're—*worse*. Because you hated Randolph Baylor, without real cause, you stole his signatures and forged vouchers to ruin him !”

“Well, if I did?” growled Hardy. “I had good cause to hate him ——”

“Then you stole his child, after saving her from the wrecked steamer in the Gulf. *You* told me so, Kyle!”

“So I *did*,” Hardy broke in. “But I never meant ——”

“Those forged papers are in your breast pocket, now,” Miles went on, relentless. “And that girl child is ——”

“Where?” gasped Hardy, crouching on the table, but glancing fearfully over his shoulder, in the direction of the other's fixed stare.



"Where? Why, *dead!*" Miles answered. "You told me yourself that you made way with Baylor's gal baby, eighteen years ago!"

"So, I did, and I can't get that child—I can't get May Redfern, her mother—out of my mind, to-day! Damnation! I'm losing my grip! I've got nerves, Tip! Say," and he leaned eagerly across the table, whispering hoarsely, "do *you* believe they come back? The dead ones? *I do!* I believe they are haunting me!"

Shuddering, with fearful eyes and clenched hands, Kyle Hardy sat staring into vacancy toward the door. Buried in his horrors, he did not hear what Miles' quick ear caught; a girl's light step on the stair; a slower man's step following.

"Yes; I believe she used to come back," Hardy mumbled. "It is years now, since she haunted me; but she comes again! Poor May! I can look into her eyes now; I can see her as she last — Great God! *May!* Am I mad? *Do* the dead haunt?"

With a wild yell, the gambler rose, as he glanced into the mirror before him; his knees trembling, his eyes protruding and great sweat damps standing on his brow.

Juny, pausing in the doorway as he spoke, made a quick gesture to warn Colonel Baylor back.

"Only your conscience haunts you, Kyle Hardy," she said. "I am *not* dead, as you hoped!"

At the sound of the voice behind him, the trembling gambler slowly turned, tearing his eyes from the reflection in the mirror.

"Not *dead?* After all these years?" he muttered, passing his hand across his brow. "That same dress. Oh! May! Speak to me—tell me! My God! Those eyes! Now, she looks like the girl in the burning house! *Can* it be Juny?"

"It is Juny," the girl cried, "who lives to denounce you as —"



Crouching low, the gambler thrust his hand into his breast, ready to spring ; but Will stepped before the curtain covering him with a pistol, the same instant that Miles' wrist twisted the revolver close to his face.

"Drop it, Coyote!" he said slowly. "Drop it, or I'll blow your roof off; and that's too good for—*Jack Harrington!*"

"Jack Harrington!" echoed Colonel Baylor, rushing into the door. "Jack Harrington, *here!*"

All fear and doubt passed from Hardy's face. The stronger hate of years cleared his brain and told him he was tricked and lost! In their place rose a look of hideous hate—fiercer and more fell because impotent! With glaring eyes he hissed through his set teeth:

"Yes—curse you! here—and hereafter! *I am* Jack Harrington. Tricked by this soft! But I'd have paid you, this time!"

"Oh! Dad, I'm *so* happy," Juny cried, embracing Colonel Baylor. "For now the forged papers can harm you no more."

"Damn you! You've got the age on me now!" Hardy said brutally; and he hurled the papers on the floor. "There they are! but there are other modes of vengeance, Randolph Baylor—and if I do not use them, *may I die before the dawn!*"

With a quick, backward spring, he reached the window and disappeared through it before Miles could aim. Then, as Will rushed to the window, leveling his pistol, the colonel struck it up.

"No! let him go," he said. "*She* plead for him once!" And his eyes, wet with tears of mingled memory and gladness, rested on the picture. Suddenly they fell upon Juny, then traveled back to the canvas again, as a strange, yearning look crept into them.



"And, dad, dear," the girl said, creeping her hand around his neck, "again we have to thank this good friend."

"Stow thanks," Miles answered grimly. "As for friends, dodge 'em. When you're up, they use you; down, they kick you. And as for *you*, Lady Lofty," he added to Mrs. Browne, as she entered the room, "henceforth I'll trouble *you* no more."

"Sister!" exclaimed the surprised colonel. "Do *you* know this man?"

"Yes, brother; shameful, hideous as the confession——" But Juny had flown to Mrs. Browne, throwing her arms about her neck and whispering in her ear:

"Oh! Aunt! Do *not* tell dad; *spare him!*" And Mrs. Browne, caressing Juny proudly and tenderly, drew herself up, and with prideful scorn regarded Miles, as she whispered back: "I hardly expected it of you, my dear. Very proper pride; *very!*"

Then in the awkward silence, Miles moved slowly round the table:

"There's too many a-dealin' to finish this game," he said quietly. "Randolph Baylor, for twenty years Jack Harrington followed you with deadly hate, because he loved——*May Redfern!*"

"*Loved—my wife!*"

"From the hour I learned that, in the Shiners' Gap, I've followed him; for *I loved her, too!*"

He paused; turned to the picture; then added, with trembling voice:

"Don't speak—let *me* finish. From the hour she married you, your proud kin despised the poor girl, worth them all! And I swore to your proud sister there, though *we* had been sweethearts, too, I'd shield her reputation by——"

"Heavens!" cried Mrs. Browne. "It's all out! *How* can I hold up my head before society!"



With wondering flush upon his face, Will started forward, exclaiming :

“ Mother ! *What* is all this ? *Who* is this man ? ”

But before any could speak, Miles clasped his hands and, with eyes softened by brimming tears, fixed upon the portrait, whispered :

“ Miles Redfern ; *her brother !* ”

A pause of astonishment for one instant ; then Will broke it with the cry :

“ Now, I see it all ! Uncle, his hand has restored you his niece—May Redfern’s child—stolen by the——— ”

But, ere he could finish, Juny was at the colonel’s heart, with the glad cry :

“ Dad ! *My own dad !* ”





## CHAPTER XL.

## THE ENDING OF A CONFESSION.

When Captain Hunter Beagle had sent Will Browne on his wild quest after the papers at Browne Beach, he turned his whole attention to restoring the consciousness of the beautiful woman, lying so still and white upon the bed. And, though little assisted by the old quadroon—who, dazed by the recent scene, was helpless as a child and only wrung her hands and moaned—he was rewarded by seeing the color begin to return to her face.

At last, with a deep sigh, she unclosed her dark, liquid eyes; and, after gazing vaguely at him a moment, extended her hand languidly.

“It is *very* good of you, Monsieur Jonson,” she said gently, as he took it in both of his. “I have been ill—no? Oh! I remember now! It was *he* who threatened me! who tried to kill maman! And *I!*” She sat bolt upright, her eyes wild. “Oh! Monsieur, *have* I killed him?”

“No; he is safe,” the man replied; adding *sotto voce*: “The more’s the pity!”

“I remember it all now,” the girl went on; dropping back wearily upon her pillow, with trembling lips and brimming eyes. “I know how you warned me; how I proved it! Ah! Monsieur, you meant well, but you have made me very—*very* miserable!”

“Oh! Lili,” Beagle cried impulsively, “do not look at it that way! You had to know it some day. The sooner the better for you.”

“Ah! Monsieur, *but* you do not know—*all!* You do not know. He was everything to me! I am not as another——”



She turned her face away from him; adding in French: "Ah! Maman, *how* shall I tell him!"

But the old quadroon—her natural stoicism returned now—shrugged her shoulders and left the room.

"Yes, I *do* know, mademoiselle," the detective said gently and respectfully. "I know *more* than you suspect; indeed, I know *all*!"

Only her wide, wondering eyes answered; and he went on:

"As you are frank to me, let me be true to you. I am not what I seem to you, but a detective—a spy. I came into your house simply to watch the movements of this wretch you have driven from you ——"

She made a quick gesture of dissent; half rising from the pillow.

"Stop! Monsieur," she said, "you *shall not* so speak of him!"

"I speak only truth," he rejoined quickly. "You do not know *how* vile, how unworthy he is!"

"Perhaps not," she said, again turning her face, as a red flush crept over it. "But I *do* know that —— *I love him*!"

Beagle looked blankly at the rounded cheek, flushed and soft, turned from him. He was posed.

"Yet," he said gently, "you proved all I said, and more. Last night you saw your rival ——"

"Ah! You know *that*?"

"Indeed, mademoiselle, I know *everything*," he answered. "In tracking *him*, I was forced to learn everything of *you*. I know your past history—your relations to him ——"

"Yes; that I am not his ——" The flush deepened over her face.

"His wife? Thank God! I *do* know that," he said warmly. "Fortunate, indeed, is the accident that saved you that *lasting* disgrace! I know that, as a child, he deceived you and your mother; I know that you have been



true to him as few wives are to wronging husbands ; I know that he has neglected, ill-used you and ——”

The girl was staring at him, with lips apart. Twice she had tried to speak ; and now, only a supreme effort forced the words :

“ But you do not know that I——about my——” She covered her face with her hands, sobbing.

“ Your birth ? Yes ; I know that, too,” he finished very gently. “ And I know that you are *an angel* !” And again he seized her hands, taking them from her face with gentle force.

“ Monsieur !” Lili could only gasp ; her wonderful eyes wide, the dampened masses of her glorious hair falling about her.

“ Yes ; knowing all I know, watching you as I have watched—first from business, then from gentler motive—I tell you, Lili Duvrai, *I love you* !”

“ Ah ! Monsieur, you are mad !” the girl cried, bewildered. “ I, with base blood in my veins—my reputation gone ! I, whom you have seen cling to the feet that spurned me ! You love *me* ?”

“ I do !” the man said gently. “ Thank God, *I do*. Save the love for my poor old mother, it is the first honest feeling I have known since boyhood. I would deem it privilege—honor—to spend my whole life to make yours happy !”

And speaking these remarkable words, Captain Hunter Beagle bowed over the Octoroon's hands he held and covered them with kisses.

She did not withdraw them. There was something so delicious in the new incense of respect—something so much higher than the brute passion Hardy had shown, even in his softest moods—that the girl closed her eyes, listening, without the power to repel what really she valued nothing, for its own sake.



“Yes,” the man went on, “I would study your wishes only to gratify them; I would make new wants for you, only to fill them! Ah! Lili, you listen to me. You do not scorn the love I offer——”

“No, Monsieur!” The girl was on her feet; her pale face, framed in its masses of loose hair, turned to him. “No, indeed, Monsieur, I *do not* despise your feeling! I do not scorn the words that tell it! But I am startled and surprised that you—who know my past—who know my *blood*—who know that I love another, should offer me——” Suddenly she stopped, looking sadly at him.

“Finish,” he said gently. “Should offer you love—devotion——”

“And—*insult!*” The woman’s voice was soft and low; there was no bitterness in it, only a depth of sadness that seemed to come from her heart’s core and to lay its signet deep and strong upon her face, as she spoke.

“No; I know what you would say!” she went on quietly. “That the love *you* offer me is different from *his!* But, oh! is the *shame* it would bring different? Is the one little claim I have to the pity—if not the respect—of man or woman, not wanting in your words? The claim that I *loved* him as a child; that I sinned thro’ love alone! Ah! Monsieur, if you could read the bitterness in the hearts of my accursed race—white in skin and taste and sentiment—pure in our loves and gentle in our needs! Yet we are outcasts from all that is pure and good and gentle—not by our own sin, but by the sin of those whom God’s command should teach us to revere! Ah! no, Monsieur; talk not to me of *love!* Do not mistake, misdeem that pure word as *I* have done! Could you wash that one black drop from all my blood; could you undo the sin that crime before my birth has *forced* on me, were I a pure woman of your own race—then what you say might not seem mocking, or insult!



Nay!" She was walking the room now, with quick, uneven tread; her eyes aflame, a burning spot in either cheek; her voice low still, but saturated with feeling so intense that it vibrated painfully on the man's ear. "*Nay! Monsieur, I understand you do not mean it for either; that you fancy you care for me; that, perhaps, you really love me—now! But what am I? Could the cast-off plaything of another become your mistress now, when——*"

"Stop! You shall not do such injustice to me," the man cried. "Far less shall you do it to yourself! The love I offered you is not that love. It is truer, better than you know!"

She stood before him transfixed—radiant. The glow in her cheeks burned crimson, for the wild, half-formed imaginings of a whole life; the shapeless yearning for a purer love; the wild craving for the right to that and to the name of wife suddenly stood embodied to her hope! The man's words, his earnestness, his persistence to condone the past by the future, all stunned the poor girl's better sense; and, with wildly throbbing heart, she stood one second, a beautiful statue of Aspiration! The next—with a great gasp, she fell upon her knees, the crimson torrent of her life rushing from her lips, as nothing might stay it!

Wildly screaming for the mother, Beagle quickly caught the girl, laying her head low with her arms at her side. Then he rushed down to the kitchen, seized the old woman there and cried: "Salt! Quick! All the salt you have!"

Into the withered face flashed the lightning of intuition, as she caught the red stains upon his hands and breast. Seizing a box of salt, she thrust it into his hands, crying: "Quick! She sall die!"

Then she followed his rush up the steps, with terror-winged feet; shaking her head and moaning: "*Encore! Sall thees coup keel? Ah! mo' dieu! Sall m' Lili die?*"



## CHAPTER XLI.

## EVASIT!

Larry had borne the note from Will to Beagle's house, and the yellow-ochre Memnon had once more become vocal.

The sudden and shocking illness of the Octoroon—to whose aid her son had summoned her—seemed to have thawed the frozen fonts of speech within her.

"Hunter is not here," she said, recognizing the boy. "But, if the message from Browne is very important, you'd best take it over there!" And she came out on the steps and pointed to Hardy's house.

"Kerect! Yer kin tumble!" Larry replied. "I know th' shebang; Kurn'l deller Platter's habode!"

"Go quietly!" the woman answered, relapsing into yellow-ochre. "Lady very ill!"

Beagle had never left the side of the plainly dying girl, save to rush to his own house to summon his mother and telephone for a noted doctor.

But, first, he had crammed salt into her mouth until the violence of the hemorrhage ceased; then laying her on the bed as tenderly as a mother might lift her infant. And, meanwhile, the poor old quadroon had aided him effectively; uttering ever a string of heart-broken jargon, of which the tone alone conveyed any meaning to him.

The doctor had applied stiptics; had carefully examined the patient; the deep crimson flow had ceased.

"Will she live?" Beagle asked, with intense anxiety.

The man of science shook his head.

"A very doubtful case;" he said. "Very! She is a very fragile woman; temperament highly nervous, and the



flow has been immense. It is not from the lungs, but hemorrhage of some great vessel. She *may* react—*possibly*! She may—more probably—go out like a candle! If she moves at all, repeat this mixture.”

Hunter Beagle stood in the hall a moment, after the doctor left. Then he ascended the stairs, with a strange pallor on his usually immobile face.

The old quadroon was sitting on the bed's edge, drawn up into a knot; her apron pulled tight over her grey hair. She was softly stroking one of the fair, slim hands in her wrinkled, brown paw; furtively stooping to kiss it, sometimes, with the fidelity of a dumb animal, rather than the humanity of affection.

The man turned the gas very low; stole softly to the girl's side, taking her hand tenderly. Gently he pressed a finger on the rounded wrist. There was scarcely a flutter in the pulse; sometimes it seemed to stop altogether.

Night fell mirk and starless over the city; passing sounds ceased in the narrow Place, and still those two strangely mated watchers sat, silent and sad, on either side of the white, beautiful statue of womanhood, seemingly as lifeless as the marble it resembled.

Larry's step upon the porch caught the trained ear of the detective, and slipping noiselessly down stairs, he read Will Browne's note, with clouding brow.

“Wait!” he said, with brevity worthy of his mother; and turning into the parlor, he wrote rapidly:

*“At Hardy's house. Lili rapidly dying. He is certain to come here before flight. Will watch for him.”*

Handing the note to the boy, he said: “For Browne, at the station. Do not miss him, on your life!” And as Larry sped away on his errand, the detective again ascended to his vigil by the sick girl. As he went, he drew from his pocket the slim, bright handcuffs, testing their springs.



"They hold well!" he said grimly, as he set the locks. "I have proved that; and I'll snap them over that devil's wrists—*so help me God!*"

Dull and leaden-footed the minutes tread on each other's heels. The clock chimed eight, then nine; and Lili lay still and cold, almost pulseless. Ever and again the rough man—with more than woman's gentleness—moistened the pale lips with brandy; then sat down again—to wait! And all that while the old quadroon never stirred; sitting there curled into a wrinkled knot, her bleared eyes fixed upon her daughter's face.

At last, on the stillness of the Place grated carriage wheels; women descended; and again Beagle slipped down stairs. To his surprise he found Juny and Gus, with Will Browne and Lake. At the latter he stared in infinite surprise, as Will said:

"The ladies insisted on coming. We had your note at the train. They have met the—lady and sympathize with her."

"Uncle and mamma drove home," Gus said in a whisper. "We can only stay a moment. We made an excuse of stopping at a drug store."

"I knew aunt would never consent," Juny said. "And I felt I *must* see that poor girl. Is she *very* ill?"

"Ill to death, I fear," Beagle answered huskily. "If you'd see her alive, go up at once. Go softly, please!"

The girls ascended; and the detective—who had never taken his eyes from Lake—said shortly:

"Mickey, how in the world did you——"

"Never mind; I'll explain later. It's all right!" Lake replied, nervously enough to attract Will's notice.

"Do you know anything about this man?" he asked shortly.

"He's all right," Beagle answered. "There's nothing on him. I know him as salesman in my sister's notion store,



in Brooklyn. He's a good one, if he wasn't a crank on fancy advertising dodges, mock art and sich. But for his wife ——"

Will moved a step nearer the open door. "Come here!" he said to Lake, quietly, but in a tone that brooked no delay. And as the Evolutionist obeyed, he added, still quietly: "You'd better go. In a scene like this, I prefer not to kick you out ——"

Only Beagle heard the words. The art lecturer had disappeared, and Will, turning to the detective, whispered:

"What did you say his *wife's* name was?"

"Why his, of course," Beagle answered. "Mrs. Mickey Brannigan."

He closed the door and motioned Will to the stairs. Silently the two young girls stood at the bed of death, gazing upon the closed blue lids; the half-closed blue lips, through which no breathing seemed to come—with woman's pity for suffering womanhood. Then Juny knelt and lifted gently the fair, cold hand upon the coverlid, her eyes wet with sympathy.

As she did so, slowly the trembling lids unclosed and Lili's calm, black eyes rested upon the clear, blue ones. Then they filled with infinite tender pity, as they turned to the crouching figure of the old quadroon.

"Hush, Lili!" Beagle whispered warningly. "You *must not* speak, the doctor said!"

A faint, sad smile flickered a moment round the blue lips. Then she faintly beckoned Juny closer, and the girl drew her fair, bright face nearer the Octoroon's. In a faint, hoarse whisper, heard only by her, Lili said:

"So good to come! Last night made me feel not wholly an outcast! I am dying—fast! Would you mind kissing me again?"

"Mind? Poor girl!"



And Juny's round arms crept around the cold breast of the girl; her warm lips pressed the cold blue ones in a kiss that was a sacrament!

The black eyes softened with grateful love upon the blue; then, with pitying tenderness, they once more turned upon the aged figure there; and, as the cold hand gently pressed the wrinkled one that held it, they softly closed.

Suddenly they opened wide and clear—filled with the Love unutterable. A Benign Hand seemed to pass over the face, filling its drawn lines with peace and beauty of another land!

Reverently Juny rose and looked down upon the face of the girl, passing, as she knew, to a better life; and her hand slipped into Will's with a pure trust that went to his heart.

Then once the blue lips moved:

"*Maman! àdieu!*" And they were still.

For the first time the old quadroom moved. Without a sound, almost without motion, she lay beside the daughter, who had left her sorrows here and gone home!

\* \* \* \* \*

Will Browne had driven the girls home and was now back, sitting on the dark, back porch with Hunter Beagle, while women's hands had done last offices for what was left of Lili.

Neither man spoke now. Beagle had said:

"He's sure to come this way. He'll not risk the street. Let *me* take him. I ask it as a—*right!*"

So, they sat awhile. Suddenly the hinge of the little gate creaked; and Beagle's hand warningly pressed Will's knee, as he rose and glided into deep shadow by the door. Feet tiptoed up the path, ascended the low steps and crossed the porch. The door opened softly and a gleam from the hall lamp fell on Kyle Hardy's hand, as he released the knob. That instant it flashed back from bright metal; a sharp click rang on the night; and, ere the gambler knew, a vice-like grip was on his other wrist. With an oath, he hurled his



full weight toward his assailant. In the darkness, Beagle stepped back; and the thud of his brass knuckles brought Hardy to his knee, half-stunned. Ere he could recover, the second click had sounded sharp and clear.

The law had overtaken Jack Harrington.

"Get up, you brute!" Beagle's voice was low; muffled by suppressed fury. "I don't want to hurt you—before you hang!"

Hardy rose sullenly, stupid from the blow, as Beagle pushed open the door.

"I don't understand this assault!" he growled. "On my own premises. What! *You*, Mr. Johnstone! and—*Will Browne*! Oh! now I see!"

Then he kept dogged silence, while Beagle went to the door, whistled low and said to the officer who came:

"Call two men from Second-avenue station, Cassidy. I have a dangerous prisoner."

"Can't I see my wife?" Hardy asked at length.

Did looks kill, Hardy had died in his tracks, so venomous was the hate that gleamed from Beagle's eyes, as he said slowly:

"You murdered her! She lies dead upstairs!"

Ashen—with staring eyes—the gambler gave one great gasp and staggered against the wall. Trying to speak, his eyes rather than his lips asked Browne for confirmation.

"It is true!" Will answered. "She broke a blood-vessel when you fled to-day. She died an hour ago."

The man's great chest rose and fell, in fruitless effort for speech, ere he muttered hoarsely:

"May I see her before they come?"

Beagle made as if to speak, but Will Browne answered quickly: "Yes; it is your right."

Slowly the three men passed up to the chamber of death, where only Mrs. Beagle watched.



Hardy passed to the bedside and looked silently down upon the woman he had loved and won and ruined.

And, as he looked, he seemed to change before their eyes. The brutal, dogged expression it had worn since capture, dropped from his face like a mask. The present left him, and the hand of the past, with softening touch, pressed on his features. Out of them fell the hardness of recent years; and the gentleness of earlier days crept into the eyes that gazed so steadily upon the still face beneath them.

Gradually he sank upon his knees, his fettered hands resting on the bed, his head drooping lower—nearer—until it pressed close the cold cheek of the dead!

So, awhile; silence unbroken in that room.

One long, convulsive shiver passed through Hardy's frame.

Then he was still again; so still, and still so long, that it grew unbearable!

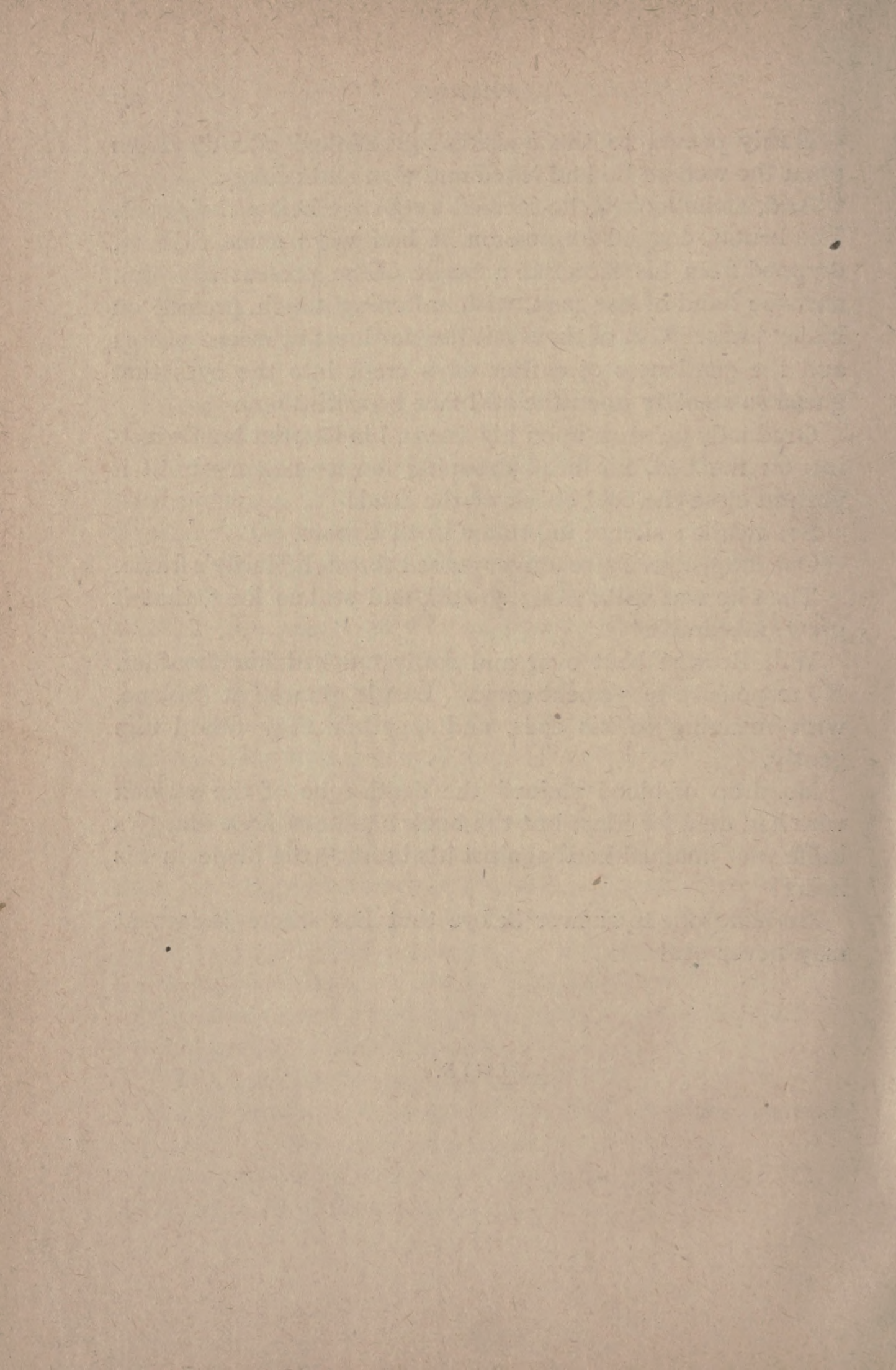
Will Browne bent over and softly touched his shoulder. No responsive movement came. Beagle glanced at Browne, with meaning in his eyes, and together they raised him gently.

No drop of blood stained the death-robe of the woman who had died for him; but the buck handle of Kyle Hardy's knife was jammed hard against his breast—the blade in his heart!

He had gone to answer before that Bar where Judgment may never err!

FINIS.











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